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"STRONG AND FREE."

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when going out as Capt
Lambie M. 27th

STRONG AND FREE.

A Book for Young Men.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE EVERARD, M.A.

VICAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, DOVER;

AUTHOR OF "IN SECRET," "THE RIVER OF LIFE," ETC.

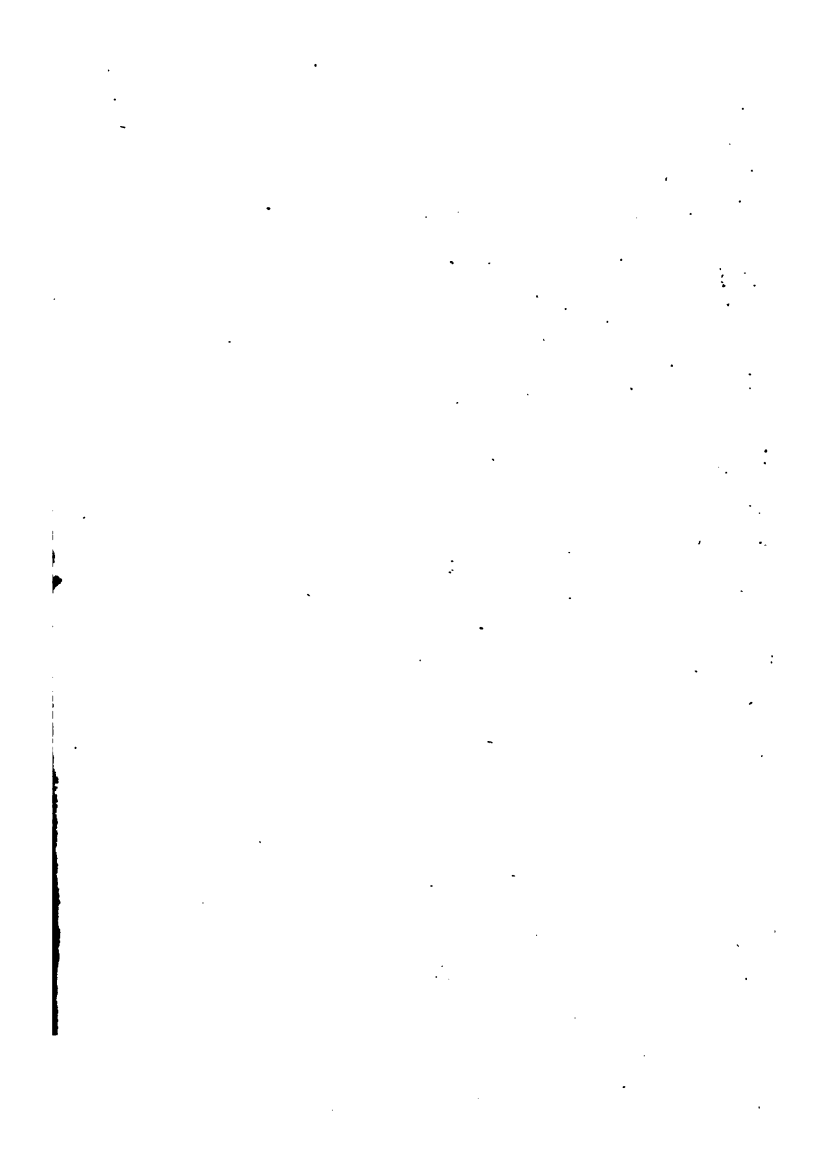
*WITH A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER FROM THE
LATE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.*

Thirty-second Thousand.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCLXXXVIII.



34616 E. 3.

CASTLE WEMYSS,
WEMYSS BAY, N.B.,
Sep. 5, 1881.

DEAR SIR,

At the time you were so good as to send me a copy of your proposed publication, I was so engaged that I could not devote my attention to it.

I have now done so, and I am happy to say that I venture to place it among the very best I know for the instruction and guidance of young men—young men of every degree of social or intellectual position.

Chapter II., "What is truth?" is specially adapted to the inquiries and doubts of all ages.

In page 117 you dwell with due force on one form of abomination, which is becoming daily more frequent in children of the tenderest

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P.C. 117

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years, who can hardly be said to be seduced, but are actually sold for any sum that is sufficient to tempt the parents.

A vast question is opened up here, one which, when propounded only for consideration, is met with a wonderful and copious variety of arguments and protests. I mean the question of early marriages. I am not ignorant that the state of society has rendered, and still renders, such a system one of inconceivable difficulty, but there are many remedial elements in it.

I heartily approve the chapter, "What do you think of my religion?" And many of those who read it will do the same. But will they say so? I trow not.

Yours truly,

SHAFTESBURY.

1844

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"STRONG AND FREE."

A Book for Young Men.



I.

"STRONG AND FREE."

SUCH were the words I noticed beneath the picture of a noble eagle with outspread wings soaring upwards to the sky. It was the motto of an Athletic Society, and when I saw it, it was upon a placard announcing certain athletic sports to be held in the neighbourhood.

I take these words as a suitable motto for young men. I scarcely know a better illustration of a high and glorious course than that of the eagle, strong and free, mounting higher and higher. Nor is it a life beyond you. A gracious promise tells how it may be attained: "They that wait

upon the Lord shall renew their strength : they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint " (Isa. xl. 31).

In many respects the motto is a good one for young men. It is a capital thing to be "strong and free" physically. Hence such sports as tend to develop the muscle and give elasticity to the body are not to be despised. Strong limbs, a supple frame, whatever enables a man to undergo severe toil, to endure hardship and privation, to put the best foot forward,—all this is most valuable and helpful. It is a priceless gift to the soldier or the sailor, to the traveller in uncivilised countries, to the emigrant who has to clear the land and build himself a homestead, in fact, to every one who would be strong to labour, active and quick in what he has to do, and able to rough it whenever there is need.

I knew of a young clergyman, in years gone by, who had this power, and by means of it did very much good. He was an excellent Alpine climber, and had great physical strength, and knew how to utilise it in the service of his Master.

With a magic-lantern on his shoulder, he would walk six, eight, or even ten miles, then give an admirable lecture, illustrated by missionary slides; then pack up his traps, walk back, and reach his home somewhere about midnight.

Unhappily on one of his Swiss journeys he was too venturesome. He attempted to climb the Matterhorn, but he fell, and with his two companions he lies buried at Zermatt, surrounded on all sides by the mountain heights he loved so well.

There is no need you should follow him in risking your life, but I do hope you will endeavour, like him, to be "strong and free" in body, and then make good use of the gift you possess. To do this, beware of all sloth and self-indulgence. Beware of every habit of excess that will injure the vigour and strength of your constitution. When you have opportunity, give an afternoon or evening to a good game of cricket, to the Gymnasium, or boating, or football, or mount your bicycle and enjoy the pleasure of going almost as fast as the express train. If this is beyond you, at any rate take a good

walk of eight or ten miles, or even of three or four. This is far better than idling in the house, when you might be getting good healthy exercise.

A word by the way I would here drop to any young friend who is fond of his bicycle. I am glad you are, though sometimes you come rather too near, and so quietly withal, that I am afraid you are going to run over my toes! I suppose I must put up with this, but there is one thing I do ask you. I wish you would spare the Sunday. I am sure you would if you knew the blessing of keeping it holy, and the pain you sometimes give to those who value it aright. Put your bicycle aside on Saturday night. It won't grow rusty before the Monday, and perhaps you will enjoy it all the more from having spent a quiet, happy day in the House of God.

One thing I am sure you will never regret. The more you can spend of God's day in whatever will be a help to yourself and others, the greater will be your peace and the brighter your crown hereafter. To the surprise of his wife, a Christian working man used to rise earlier on

Sunday than any day in the week. At last he gave her the reason: "I like the day I give to my Saviour to be the longest in the week." If your spirit be something like this, every Sunday will be a step on the ladder, leading you nearer to your everlasting Home.

But our motto will lead us a step or two further. It is good to be "strong and free" physically; it is still better to be so morally. What a benefit and comfort to yourself and to many beside will it be if you are strong in moral principle and decision of character and free from the slavery and bondage of bad habits. The angel said to Daniel, "O man greatly beloved, be strong, yea, be strong." So would I say to you. Be strong to do the right, to go forward in the path of straightforward honesty and integrity of purpose in spite of legions of enemies and hosts of difficulties. Speak truly, live truly, act truly. Be strong to resist whatever is of evil. Abhor and reject every temptation to turn aside. Be firm as a rock against every enticement to pleasure or profit at the cost of a good conscience. Be able to

say "No," to mean it, and to stick to it, though the wary tempter have a tongue as smooth as oil and as musical as a siren's note. Avoid the very first step in evil. Don't break the fence with the idea that you can soon make up the breach. Don't go a little way in the wrong direction imagining that you can easily make up what is lost.

It is said that if a man goes out with newly cleaned boots, he walks carefully, so as not to bemire them; but when they have been soiled with the mud in the streets, then he will go through the deepest mire and not mind it. I am sure this is true in one sense. There is a pain about the first act of sin; but when the conscience is accustomed to what is wrong, a man will go anywhere and do anything, and will feel but little the sin he is committing.

My young friend, beware of a single blot on the conscience. Keep clear of associates with whom you are not safe. Watch against the touch of evil. Turn from the spot where danger is likely to meet you.

Is it not true that many a young man flatters himself that he is "a bird of free-

dom" whilst he is the veriest slave under the sun? He cannot say "Nay" to the least temptation, though he knows full well it is injuring his character, destroying his future prospects, bringing upon himself a scourge of many cords in the upbraidings of a guilty conscience, and wounding and grieving those who love him best upon earth. If he be free, it is the freedom of the lamb in the desolate wild, free to roam where it will, but sure to perish at length through hunger or as the spoil of fierce wolves. Far be from you freedom like this! Give me rather the safety of the fold, the guiding care of the Good Shepherd; yea, and if need be, the rod to chasten me when I stray, that I may return to the peace and security of His faithful guardianship.

From the arts that would allure us,
From the toils that would ensnare,
Thou who slumberest not secure us
By Thy ever-watchful care :
And if e'er from Thee we roam,
Fetch, O fetch, Thy wanderers home.

But how may you be thus "strong" in right principle and "free" from such bonds

and snares as I have named? There is only one way. A good education is not enough. Even the example and training of godly parents, though beyond all price, is not strong enough to secure you at all times against the assaults that may overcome you. The true secret of moral strength and liberty is the spiritual strength and freedom which Christ alone can give.

In yourself you have no strength—none whatever. “Without me,” Christ says, “ye can do nothing.” You have no power to do a single thing aright or to beat down one snare of the wicked one.

“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall” (Isa. xl. 30). That is, mere natural powers, mere human strength, even the good purposes of youth, will succumb in the great battle with sin, the world, and the Devil. Man is described as “the worm,” and what power has the worm to resist an enemy or to rise above the earth on which it crawls?

But learn to know your weakness, and then learn to know the abundant strength

laid up for you in Christ. "My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart that imparts true strength and liberty, and, when you come by faith to Christ, this gift He bestows. Trusting in His grace, leaning on His mighty arm, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, in the very highest sense you shall know what it is to be "strong and free."

You shall be strong! You shall be strong to fight His battles and to endure hardness as a good soldier of His cross. You shall be strong to run the heavenly race and to win a bright crown of glory. You shall be strong to do right, however hard and difficult at times it may be. And you shall be free! You shall break off the fetters of former sin. You shall enjoy the liberty of a conscience set free from the bonds of guilt. You shall have freedom of access into God's presence, as a dear child, crying Abba, Father. You shall experience that Christ's

yoke is an easy one and His burden light, because you bear it in the spirit of grateful love.

In the service which Thy love appoints
There are no bounds for me,
But my heart is taught the secret truth
That makes Thy children free,
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty.

Yes, abiding in Christ, waiting upon the Lord in humble, continual prayer, you shall be "strong and free." Like the eagle mounting higher and higher, you shall rise nearer to God, and drink in more of the joy of communion with Him. You shall live a joyful, heavenly life whilst here below, and rise at length to share the joys which are at Christ's right hand.

Before I close this chapter I should like to draw a contrast or two.

You may remember the story of an Irish eagle in its upward flight looking down on the lake beneath and catching sight of a carcase floating on the surface. Poising for a moment on its pinions, it darted downwards, fixed its claws in the dead body of the animal, and gorged itself with

the spoil it had found. But it never rose again. When it attempted to do so, the water had frozen on its wings, and it was shortly afterwards captured and killed.

The story has its lesson for the young. You may be caught in the same way. You have begun to seek a higher life, but there comes a terrible snare. Your eye is attracted by something which is pleasant to the flesh, and if you yield, it may be death to the soul. You may be drawn down to earth. You may lose all taste for higher things. The wing of faith may lose its power. You may be led by this one thing to give up the bright and blessed hope of the everlasting kingdom, and you may live and die without Christ and without hope.

Remember the words, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

But let me present another contrast. Have you ever noticed the eagles chained and caged at the Zoological Gardens? There you see some noble bird which, in its native state, would roam for miles over

the desert, and make many a flight toward the sky, now unable to escape its fetters, and day after day losing more and more its vigour and strength. It is not now "strong and free," as once it may have been, but a poor captive, wearing out its life in its long imprisonment.

And is there not something here that may be parallel to the condition of many a one?

There are those who permit their thoughts and desires to be chained down to earth by business duties or the cares of daily life. They give themselves to these as if there were nothing higher or better. They neglect the sacred duty of prayer. They never ponder the great truths of Holy Scripture. Even the Sunday makes but little difference, as on God's holy day there is no hearty seeking after God and His kingdom. Oh, do not thus cast away your brightest and highest privilege. Do not thus sacrifice the joys which might otherwise mingle with your commonest duties.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth

corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. vi. 19, 20, 21).

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. iii. 1, 2).

Lord, draw my heart from earth away,
And make me only hear Thy call;
Speak to my inmost soul and say,
I am thy God, thy strength, thy all.
To feel Thy power, to hear Thy voice,
To taste Thy love be all my choice.

II.

WHAT IS TRUTH ?

A YOUNG man had fallen into loose habits, and was living a wild, fast life. Late hours were frequent with him, and he would pay no regard to the remonstrances of a Christian father. Eleven and twelve o'clock would strike, and still the young man would keep the household up waiting for his return. At last it came to a point. The father told his son that he must either leave his home or conform to rules. He followed his old ways, went into lodgings, and was rather pleased to be free from the restraint he felt at home. After a while he picked up some young companions who professed infidel opinions, and soon, like them, he even scoffed at religion and made light of all his parents had taught him. But the prayers of his father and mother followed him, and in a remarkable

way were abundantly answered. One night the young fellow lay awake and began to think. "I tell people," said he to himself, "that there is no truth in the Bible. But there must be truth somewhere, and if not there, where is it? I wonder what the Bible says about truth."

In this way he was led to go to the Scriptures, and he sought out every passage where truth is spoken of. He little anticipated the result. No doubt through the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, he saw everything in a new light. The Bible became its own witness. It so took hold of him that he was persuaded that it was the very Word of the Living God. Not only so, but he was convinced of the evil of his past life. He saw plainly his ingratitude to his parents and his sin against God. He was led to see Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and his whole future was the very reverse of his former course.

The story brings home to us two great lessons. It shows, on the one hand, the very close connection that exists between loose and immoral habits and infidel views,

Whilst, no doubt, there are not a few unbelievers whose lives are free from any great vice, yet it is no less true that if a young man goes wrong it is very convenient to lull his conscience to sleep and cast off all fear by saying to himself that "the Bible is all a lie." On the other hand, we see that God's Word shines by its own light. It often so speaks to the heart and conscience that a man cannot escape from the conviction of its truth. "It bears upon its face its own calm, bright, immutable aspect, the aspect of more than human honesty, more than angel knowledge—the aspect of Divinest truth."

"What is truth?" Christ has answered this question. He has said, "Thy Word is truth" (John xvii. 17). This had reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. No less is it true of the whole inspired volume. I will mention a few thoughts as to the truth and inspiration of the Bible which have strengthened my own faith, and have enabled me with increasing confidence to rest upon it, as a rock which can never be shaken.

I see more and more in Holy Scripture

a perfect adaptability to the various ills of mankind. A friend went into one of our lock and key manufactories, and he was shown upwards of a hundred locks, and then was told that not one of the keys would open one of the locks except the one for which it was made. But then a master-key was shown to him, and this would open any one of the hundred.

I believe Holy Scripture is like that master-key. There are myriads of human hearts, with various sins, temptations, sorrows, cares, fears, but the Bible is fitted alike to each and all. It points out the remedy for every form of misery and evil; it leaves no heart and no trouble without some balm suited for its need.

Or look at it in another light.

A child receives a letter from a father in a distant country. But some one suggests that this letter is a forgery; it is written by some one else, and not by the father. But if the child not only recognises the father's handwriting, but finds in the letter that every matter connected with those he has left behind is accurately known by the writer and the best sug-

gestions made for meeting difficulties or guarding against some danger in the home, will not this assure the child that the letter was not written by a stranger, but was indeed the kind and thoughtful letter of a beloved parent?

Holy Scripture is our Father's letter. We may trace the handwriting. The spirit of truth, holiness, and love is seen all through. But we mark that He knows and provides for the wants of every one in His large family. There are warnings to caution us against every form of sin, however subtle. There is consolation provided for every one of the manifold varieties of human woe. Hunger and want, pain and suffering, anxieties about the future, disappointments, losses, bereavements, not one of these evils, or any other, but we find some appropriate solace, some heavenly promise, that can lift the heart of the believer above it. Who could so completely have provided for every want but He who made man and knows the hearts of those whom He hath made?

Another thought has often come home to me. If Holy Scripture be not the

fruit of Divine wisdom, if it be not a message to us from above, whence comes this wonderful Book? What account can we give of it? Can it come from man's great enemy, the Devil? Is not every page of it for the overthrow of his kingdom?

Could it have been written by wicked men? Was there ever a wicked man in the world that did not hate the Bible, and either wish that it were false or endeavour to prove it so?

Could it have been written by good men out of their own hearts? But would good men have taken God's name in vain? And does not every part of it claim to be a revelation from God? Do we not find the words "Thus saith the Lord" continually occurring? And can we imagine godly men thus to have forged the name of Jehovah?

Could it have been written by fanatics and enthusiasts? Then where would have been the calm, quiet, and devout tone that pervades it? Where would have been the depth of wisdom which exercises to this day the earnest study of men of the greatest intellect?

I confess I can see no way out of this difficulty for an unbeliever. If there be difficulties in the Bible—and no doubt many such there are—it seems to me a far greater difficulty to imagine any other source but a Divine one from which it could have come. It seems to me to carry a Divine stamp upon the face of it. Its rebukes of falsehood and every kind of sin, its mighty encouragements to live a holy and a godly life, the power that is ever going forth with it to raise the fallen and the lost—all this tells me that "the Voice that spake it is Divine," in fact, bearing out its own witness, that it "came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21).

I have also been continually struck by another point. There is no varnish about the Bible. From first to last you see plain, naked truth. Look at the history of the chosen nation and of its chiefest heroes. What a record of sin and imperfection does it present! Look at the lives of apostles and disciples in the New Testament, and the story of the early

Church in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles.

Amidst the tokens of God's power and the manifestations of His grace, how often do you meet with human infirmity, errors, sins, strifes, marring "the beauty of holiness" in the Church, and showing that at all times "the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked!"

Then, too, in the narrative of Christ's life, how simply told are the mightiest miracles that He wrought! There is no attempt to dazzle the imagination or to arrest the attention. In a few plain words we read of a multitude being fed with a few loaves—of the winds and waves being hushed by a majestic "Peace, be still!"—of a Lazarus being raised by the command "Come forth!"

We find it the same in all parts of the sacred volume. There is no display, no adornment, no hiding a painful side or making much of one that is pleasing. There is the majesty of truth and reality, and nothing else. To my mind, we have here an evidence that cannot be gainsaid. It is just like all the mighty works of

God. It ought strongly to confirm our faith that "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

There are some, I know, who reject the Scriptures because the science of the day seems to be at variance with it. But true science and God's Word cannot be really opposed. Revelation is one page out of God's book, and science is another. So that the teacher of Christian truth ought never to speak against science, neither ought the teacher of science to utter a word against religion.

The two are on different levels, and a man may be very wise in one, but be profoundly ignorant in the other. I am persuaded that we shall find that there is no contradiction between Holy Scripture and the facts of science: it is only in the case of *unproved theories* that there is any apparent conflict. Take the case of Evolution. There are not a few who have taken up extreme views on the subject, and in consequence have cast aside altogether the story of Creation as given in Genesis. To do so is no light matter. The glory

of the Triune God is concerned. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all spoken of in connection with it. Besides this, the creation of man in God's own image is the groundwork of redemption. Unless there was this image at first, how can it be restored by the Spirit in conversion?

Then, too, is not the office of Christ as our Head and Representative bound up in the truth of Adam's creation? We have two chapters—Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv.—full of most precious encouragement, and both rest upon it. If there was no first Adam, how can there be a second? If it be not true that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, how can it be true that by one man's obedience many are made righteous? If it be not true that in Adam all died, how can it be true that in Christ all shall be made alive?

But for what reason do men take Jehoiakim's penknife and cut away thus a portion of God's Word? Is it not for a mere theory which many scientific men utterly reject?

Within certain limits no one doubts the truth of Evolution. It affords to my

mind one of the most wonderful proofs of the power and wisdom of God. A marvellous workman must he be who could form a watch that has the power to reproduce and multiply itself—not only once or twice, but to remote generations. But look at that flower. It contains in itself seeds, and these give flowers like it from century to century. Look at that egg. Strange that it contains the germ of a new bird, and thus from age to age the species is maintained and propagated. It seems to us still more wonderful in the case of man, with all his variety of faculties and powers.

But how far is it proved that Evolution goes? Is there a shadow of proof that man has arisen from the lower creation, and that these have sprung from atoms or molecules myriads of ages ago? If so, what a Creator must He have been who endued these atoms with this strange power!

"Nature made the world," said a sceptic. "But who made Nature?" said his little child. So I would say—If these atoms formed this wondrous world and all within

it, who fashioned these atoms so as to have this energy and force?

But is there no limit to Evolution? "Can Evolution explain the law, order, and beneficence that is everywhere visible? Can Evolution tell us the origin of life-sensation, consciousness, affection, will, conscience, morality? Can Evolution bridge over the tremendous gulf that separates man from the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air?"

I believe the time will come when those who now scorn the story of man's creation will return to it as far more reasonable than the fanciful theories which now are held by many. What more reasonable than that the Almighty by His own glorious fiat, His own omnipotent word, should call into being the creatures whom His infinite wisdom has designed?

To sum up all, I would say to the reader, "*Hold fast your title-deeds.*" Don't be persuaded by those who would rob you of your inheritance of Christian truth. Don't admit for a moment that Holy Scripture is not to be believed.

The Word is faithful. It never has failed, and it never will.

This generation will soon pass away. Its mighty men, and its rich men, and its wise men will follow their fathers to the grave. The theories and opinions of this day will give place to others. But there is a Rock that abides. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 24, 25).

O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky!
We praise Thee for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.

III.

THE GUIDING VOICE.

ONE day I had a pleasant drive of ten or twelve miles with a zealous Church Missionary friend to a meeting in a country town in Norfolk. The road was not a very direct one, and my friend had a new coachman, who seemed strange to the neighbourhood. There was no time to lose, and as the coachman might have easily taken a wrong turn, his master took good care that he should not. I was rather amused all along the way to hear him giving the word of direction. "Right," "Left," "Straight on," "Round the corner," "First turning by the church," "Sharp to the right," and so on, till we reached the town to which we were going, and then the narrow streets made it rather difficult for a carriage and pair to do anything but go straight on. However we came in

fair time, and we had a very pleasant and profitable meeting.

Any way, I had a thought for my notebook, and one that seemed to me an important one. The words of my friend recalled to me very strongly the promise of Isa. xxx. 21 : "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." Again the words of Jeremiah seemed applicable : "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23).

Here is a word of help for a young man. The path of life lies before you, but you are very liable to take a wrong turning. You may make a great mistake in the calling you follow, the situation you take, or any change that you make. But seek counsel from God and He will guide you aright. Commit your way unto Him and He will make it plain. Watch His providential leadings. Avoid the rock of self-will and self-confidence. Do not think you are wiser than any one else. Honestly wish to do what is right and best before God, and you will

not go astray. There is a promise I have given to young men who have had a difficulty in their way, and it has not seldom been a help and stay to them: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 5, 6).

Let me mention the case of a school-master at Hastings. When I knew him, he could look back with thankfulness on a long life spent in God's fear and love. He had been greatly blessed in his children, and his married life had been one of very special comfort and happiness. He told me that he traced it all to his following a word of advice given him in early life. He was leaving home with his bag on his shoulder, and an elderly man called out to him from a window, "Young man, pray and prosper." He had done so, and all through life a Father's guiding hand had been his strength and support.

Let me give another instance of God's directing providence on behalf of those who seek His guidance. During the Abyssinian war, Stern and the rest of the

prisoners were exposed to great peril from the anger of the king. . But in the expedition sent for their relief was a godly officer and many Christian soldiers. These met again and again for prayer. In the quiet shade of some rock or other retired place they committed the matter to God, and sought guidance and success in their efforts. Nor was it in vain. In the happy result and in the rescue of the prisoners they could not but distinctly trace an answer to their earnest petitions.

But where may you expect to hear "the Guiding Voice"? Surely it is in the written Word of God, read and studied under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors." "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 9, 24, 105).

Diligently read and search the Holy Scriptures. Mark both the precepts and promises of the Word. Give time and thought to ponder the historical narratives

of the Old Testament. They abound in lessons of warning for those who go astray, and in precious encouragements to those who walk in God's ways. Do this from day to day, and pray evermore for the Spirit of Truth to guide you unto all truth. Following this course, you will not be left to yourself. All through life's pilgrimage God will guide you by His counsel and hereafter receive you to His glory.

Let me add another word on this matter. Take the message direct from God to yourself. It is your Father's letter. It is sent in tenderest love, and it is your Father's will that you should peruse it for yourself. It tells in plain words whatever is needful for you to believe and do. It is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the same Spirit is ever ready to instruct each humble and devout reader.

There are some who would read the letter for you, and then leave out some of its most precious teachings, or add to it, and change and pervert its meaning. Do not yield to any such. Your Father wishes you to read the letter for yourself, and in doing so with humility and quiet thought,

comparing one part with another, you will learn best to know it in its true and proper sense. Only be honest in your dealings with Scripture. Desire to know whatever it teaches. Do not cut out a single text from its context, and then build up a system upon it. Rather endeavour to catch the spirit of the whole passage, and then see in the light of it how any particular verse may best be understood.

Let no follower of Rome rob you of this birthright. Let none keep you from studying the Word for yourself. Believe nothing that is contrary to its spirit or teaching. Never take the flickering and uncertain light of tradition or of a so-called Church authority for the bright, clear light of revealed truth. Though an angel from heaven were to bring you some new Gospel, believe it not, nor follow it.

Did you ever think of the one special lesson to be gathered from the striking narrative of the man of God given in 1 Kings xiii.? Why was the lion sent to slay him? Why did he never reach again in safety his home in the land of Judah?

We cannot but admire his bold and

faithful rebuke of Jeroboam. We commend his first refusal to tarry at Bethel. But how did he fail? How did he provoke the Lord to anger? Was it not that *he followed the message the old prophet professed to give from the mouth of God, instead of the message he had received directly from God Himself?* The old prophet bade him stay and refresh himself, and falsely said that the Lord had commanded it, whereas the Lord had Himself told him to return at once after his message had been delivered.

Are there not many at the present day who act precisely in the same way? God has given His Word, plain and clear, but many hearken to the old prophet that dwells at Rome, or to those in our own Church who walk in the same direction. They follow those who make void the Word of God through their tradition, and contradict the glorious Gospel of the grace of God. Keep clear of this dangerous error. Reject utterly any doctrine of the Sacraments which is opposed to the blessed truth of justification by faith only. Reject the subtle teaching that would draw you

to man's confessional, and hide from you the open access to the mercy-seat through our great High Priest.

Neither follow our modern prophets, who bring you a mutilated Gospel, a new-fangled Christianity—a Christianity without Christ, a Christianity without an atonement, without a Holy Spirit, lacking all the strength and joy and peace which the religion of Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists brings to the soul.

Oh, that the young men of England may stand firm on the rock of Bible truth and on the free Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! For the honour of Christ, for the welfare of His Church, for your own sake, and that of your children in days to come, be valiant in upholding the faith once delivered to the Saints. Never be ashamed to walk in the old paths. Never shrink from unfolding the banner of God's truth. God is faithful to His Word and to those who believe and maintain it. Whatsoever He hath spoken with His mouth, He will assuredly fulfil with His own right hand.

Before I close this chapter I will give a

few of those "guiding voices" which are heard in Holy Scripture, and which are peculiarly suited to those for whom this book is written.

I. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. xi. 9).

I know few more solemn warnings than this. Give yourself up to enjoy life. Go your own way. Follow your own path. Exercise no restraint. Indulge yourself to the full. Drink deep of the cup of sinful pleasure. Throw the réins on the neck of your lusts, and let nothing stop you in your course! Do this if you will. Only remember one thing. There is an eye upon you. There is a pen that records each day's evil. There is a book for men's actions, and a page in it for yours. There is a bar of assize before which one day you must appear.

Is this the sort of joy you will choose?

Is this the pleasure after which you will run? Or shall it be something purer, more real and lasting?

Side by side with the words of the wise man, on which I have been dwelling, put another word of Holy Scripture. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" (Ps. cxlix. 2).

True joy, solid joy, abiding joy is here. It is joy in God's favour and in the saving power of our King. It is joy which the Spirit gives, and which none can take away. It is joy which comes down from heaven, and which will impart something of heaven's calm in sickness, sorrow, and death. Which will you choose—the joy of the worldling, which is but for a moment, or the joy of the Christian, which will never fail?

II. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. ii. 30).

This word comes in the story of two young men. It has reference to Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli. You re-

member their sin. Profligate and covetous in the house of God, they bring shame and dishonour on His name. They made men abhor the offering of the Lord. Neither did they regard the remonstrance of their father. So they perish in their sin. The ark of God is taken; Eli dies of a broken heart, and the whole family is brought to ruin and disgrace.

But side by side with the story of these young men we have the story of Samuel.

From early youth he honours God and His service. He hearkens to God's voice, obeys God's commands, and is never afraid of the face of man. So God honours him. He lets none of his words fall to the ground. He makes him very useful in teaching His people. Thus Samuel lives beloved and respected, and when he dies he is lamented by all Israel.

Whose steps will you follow? Will you honour God, or despise Him and cast His words behind your back?

Sooner or later you will reap according as you sow. Probably more or less in the

present, and certainly in the great future, honour or shame will be your portion according as you have dealt with God.

III. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. xiii, 20).

A man is known by his friends. But more than this—a man is made or marred by his friends. Companionship is one of the great factors of life.

Choose for your friends the good and upright and moral. Throw in your lot with those who fear and love God, and they will strengthen your resolutions and help you when weak and tempted. Give yourself up to the society of the ungodly, and you will infallibly fall into their ways and share their misery. A bad companion is about the very worst enemy you can have, though a bad book may do you almost as much harm. Keep clear of both. Mind the paint. Don't touch pitch. Go the other side the road rather than shake hands with one who may draw you along with him in the path of evil.

Even while writing these lines, I have had a letter from a young man just one-and-twenty, who is condemned to spend seven of his best years at a convict establishment, through being drawn into evil by dishonest associates.

Remember the opening blessing in the Psalms: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. i. 1).

Remember the earnest exhortation of Paul on this matter: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15).

Bear this thought in mind in choosing a wife. Don't go to the ball-room to look for one. Don't be taken by good looks or the hope of L. S. D. Don't fall into a half-engagement without thinking what you are about. If you wish to follow Christ yourself, choose one who has sterling qualities that will wear well. Let it be one who has given her heart to the Lord, who is faithful and diligent in home duties, and

who has been a good daughter or sister at her own fireside.

If God should grant you one like this, though you should have to wait a few years before you meet with her, you will not regret it. She will help and not hinder you in the conflict which lies before you. She will do you good and not harm all the days of your life.

IV. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. xli. 10).

If you are walking in God's ways, take this glorious "Fear not" and go bravely forward. More than thirty years ago I heard it in the old church of Kirk-braddan, in the Isle of Man, as the text of a faithful sermon, and it sent me on my way rejoicing. So let it be with you. God Himself will be with you. He will be your God. His love, His power, and His truth will be engaged on your behalf. He will strengthen you with might by His Spirit. He will help you in every trial and temptation.

He will uphold you with His own right
hand, and bring you safe to His bright
home above.

Oh, keep me in Thy heavenly way,
And bid the tempter flee;
And let me never, never stray
From happiness and Thee

IV.

CHRIST AND YOUNG MEN.

THERE is an infinite variety and fulness in the story of Christ's life, and not less so in the precious lessons which it teaches us. There is something that touches every class and that speaks alike to all. The suffering one may find consolation, and the sorrow-stricken, broken heart may find the healing balm. Little children may listen to words that tell of His love to them, and the aged may find their youth renewed by the bright hopes which it inspires. And has not this wondrous story a special bearing on young men? Search the Gospel narrative to discover this, and it seems to me you will find that none have more of Christ's sympathy than those just going forth into the arena of life's struggles and duties.

He has left behind plain tokens that

they were not forgotten. And as a young man takes Christ for his guide and pattern and friend, and goes forth trusting in His strength alone, he will learn it by daily experience that in the light of His holy example and His life-giving words he has help which never fails him.

It is no slight proof of this to consider how the Master spent His early manhood. Unlike the Baptist, who prepared for his future mission by self-converse in the lonely desert, Christ dwelt at Nazareth and worked with Joseph at the carpenter's bench. From the age of thirteen or fourteen, and perhaps still earlier, he was engaged till thirty years old in daily toil.

"Is not this the carpenter?" was the taunt thrown out when He commenced His ministry. It was uttered in scorn and unbelief, but it contained a glorious truth.

It is true that the Creator of all worlds worked as a carpenter in a lowly Galilean village. It is true that He who built the skies, and fashioned every flower and shrub and tree, "went out to cut down timber; or at least worked it up into gates and doors,

ploughs and yokes, and many a homely bit of woodwork for the men and women of Nazareth." The rude hammer and chisel, and plane and saw, were often in those hands afterwards pierced by nails on the cross.

It was a marvellous stoop. It was condescension beyond all parallel. But love did it all. Love brought Him from heaven to earth. Love laid Him in the manger at Bethlehem. Love led Him to Nazareth and its lowly toil. Love drew Him to Gethsemane and Calvary.

Who can fathom the love expressed in the words of the Apostle—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9)?

But in Christ's work at Nazareth there is a special lesson for young men. He teaches us the dignity, the nobility of honest toil and labour.

"Patient industry, diligent, persevering work, is a pure and noble thing. It is the salt of life. It is the girdle of manliness. It saves the body from effemi-

nate languor and the soul from polluting thoughts. Therefore Christ laboured, working with His own hands, and year by year He was content to live by the fruit of His own toil, whilst in a moment He might have made all nature to supply His wants."

Yes, it was Christ's own choice so to live. Had He willed it, the noblest palaces at Rome or elsewhere had been at His disposal. He might have summoned myriads to work for Him. No! He chooses otherwise. He stoops to conquer in the great battle for man's redemption. He will wear the workman's garb and do the workman's toil. The One before whom seraphim veil their faces, and before whom hereafter every knee shall bow—He will take the lowliest place and perform the lowliest work.

Let it be your aim, my young friends, likewise, to do your own work, and faithfully to fill the niche which God in His providence has assigned to you. It is no mean or ignoble thing to toil on day by day in some quiet sphere, where the great world takes but little note of you. It was this very thing which the Son of

God did for many a long year. I know there are not a few young men who prefer to live by their wits rather than by hard work. By gambling or speculation they endeavour to make their way. Others, too, there are who waste their days in idleness, spending what others have striven hard to gain. But let a wiser choice be yours. Be one of the workers in God's world. Do your own work, and do it well. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings."

There is another point I would name as bearing on young men. In the example of Christ set before us in the Word, there is nothing more remarkable than His manliness and courage. In Him you ever find a brave and undaunted spirit, though tempered at all times with meekness, gentleness, and love. In His early days we read that "He waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom;" and this holy boldness and unshaken firmness of purpose was characteristic of His whole course. What a strength of purpose, what fixedness of will in God's service, was expressed in the very first saying that is recorded

as coming from His lips! "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And right onward through life, through good report or evil, through shame and reproach, and sorrow and suffering, this was still His spirit. Look at Christ in the Temple, casting out the buyers and sellers, and overturning the tables of the money-changers. Look at the way He dealt with Scribes and Pharisees, those who ranked highest amongst the Jews, and hearken to the "woes" which He proclaimed against them. Look at His conduct when apprehended in the Garden, going forth to give Himself up to His enemies, and thinking only of the safety of His disciples. Look at His quiet endurance of all that came upon Him through those dark hours that preceded His death. Look at our Lord before the high priest and Pontius Pilate, witnessing a good confession, owning His Divine Sonship, and telling of His coming glory. Mark all this side by side with His meekness and patience towards friends and foes, and you have a pattern and example

that will be invaluable to you in the temptations which may assault you.

Young man, cherish this holy courage, this fearless bravery, this fixedness of purpose in every good and righteous cause. Be no coward in the service of Him who faced death and conquered hell for your sake. Like Christ, be ever gentle, courteous, and considerate toward all, but likewise be firm, steadfast, immovable. Turn not aside from what you know to be right through the fear of man.

I noticed in passing through Westminster Abbey a noble testimony on the monument of Lord Lawrence—"*He feared man so little because he feared God so much.*"

Let this be your own spirit. Never be ashamed to own Christ as your King, however few may be His subjects in the place where your lot is cast. Be not afraid, if needs be, boldly to reprove sin and ungodliness. Wherever the door is open, shrink not from an earnest word that may awake a careless sinner from the death-sleep of indifference. "Stand fast in the faith; quit you like men: be strong."

And here let me remind you that true

religion is essentially a manly, noble thing. There are some who scorn the religion of the Gospel. They speak of it as if it would do very well for women and children, or for those who have done with life's duties and struggles, but as unfit for those who would go forth as "heroes in the fight."

But surely this is a mistake. Was there ever such a hero as Christ? And is not the steadfast Christian one who follows in His steps? Is it not a brave and manly thing to have the courage of your convictions and to act upon them? Is it not a brave thing to conquer tyrant lusts and overcome the evil that is in the world? Is it not a brave thing to honour a worthy Friend when all others speak evil of Him? Is it not a brave thing to stand up for truth and righteousness when the stream runs the other way, and when by doing so you lose everything but a good conscience? Assuredly no greater courage is to be found on earth than in the one who "fights manfully under Christ's banner," and who continues His faithful soldier and servant unto life's end.

Whilst speaking of Christ's interest in

young men, I would remind you of His dealings with the young ruler. The young man is very earnest in his way, and comes to Christ as an inquirer, asking Him what he shall do to inherit eternal life. Christ reminds him of the moral law, and this he claims to have obeyed from his youth. Then the Master bids him prove his obedience and sincerity by selling all that he has and following Him. Nay, this he cannot do. Much he would do, but this is too great. Unlike Matthew, unlike the sons of Zebedee and others, he cannot relinquish all. Though seeking guidance of Christ, his heart is still in the world. But mark one point. Christ knew from the beginning what he was, and how he would act. He knew full well that he was not prepared to take up His cross and follow Him. Nevertheless Christ looked upon him with an eye of love. He appreciated the earnestness, the freedom from vice, the high moral tone of his character, and He would most readily have numbered him amongst His disciples. "Jesus, beholding him, loved him."

May there not be a word here for one

who is yet undecided and afraid to give up the world for Christ?

It is possible you may stand in much the same position as this young ruler. You wish to be a Christian. You are free from all gross evil. You are near to Christ by profession, and you inquire of Him in His house, and perhaps in converse with His people. But you hesitate to pledge yourself. You shrink from an entire surrender. You cannot yet yield all to the Master.

But think of this. Christ beholds you and loves you. He would have your heart, your life, your undivided allegiance. Is not His love worth the sacrifice? Is it not worth while, if need be, to lose a little of earth to be joint-heir with Christ in all the treasures of His kingdom? You consider what you may possibly lose, but do you consider what you gain? If a man had to give up a little cottage and a small garden, but received instead a valuable estate with a mansion replete with every comfort, would he be the loser?

And if you give up anything for Christ's sake, has not the Master pledged Himself

to give you a hundredfold? Think of the temporal benefit which continually is found as the fruit of true godliness. Think of the health which is preserved through sober and temperate habits. Think of the calm quiet peace which comes from a good conscience. Think, above all, of the riches of God's everlasting love and the sure hope of the future glory.

You need never be afraid of parting with anything for Christ. He will never ask of you a single sacrifice which it is not your truest happiness to make. And in Him whatever you lose is abundantly repaid.

You may have heard of one who used to shine in London society, but who has since become a light-bearer in Christ's Church. He scarcely liked to walk with one who earnestly followed Christ lest she should say to him, "Give up, give up all your pleasures." But she did not say this. She said to him, "Get, get, get Jesus Christ and you won't want them." When this lesson was learnt, it was no hard matter to give up much that before was prized.

Side by side with the Saviour's kindness and love to the young ruler, consider His

love to the Apostle John. He was the youngest,—the one young man amongst the twelve,—and he it was who lay on, Jesus' bosom, and of whom it was said that "he was the disciple whom Jesus loved."

John also was the disciple to whom Jesus committed the care of His desolate, sorrowing mother. "Behold thy mother!" was the touching command that was to knit them both together in a lifelong tie.

And many a young man there is now whom Jesus draws very near to Himself. Do you love communion with the Saviour? Do you find a resting-place by His side? Do you lean all your care and need on Him? Do you long to have His presence ever with you? Do you hearken to every command to succour the souls He loves? Do you willingly do what lies in you for His lonely and sorrowing ones? Then may you be assured that His love is specially fixed on you. You shall enjoy a double portion of His favour and friendship. He and the Father will love you and make their abode with you.

Nor may we forget another proof of Christ's love. Few scenes bring before us

His compassion more than His restoration of the widow's son at the gate of Nain. It was a young man whom He raised from the dead. As he lay on the bier, He said to him, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And he that was dead sat up, and He delivered him to his mother.

And does He not still in a higher sense desire to restore to broken-hearted parents their dead—even the sons who are sleeping the sleep of spiritual death? Does He not desire to fulfil their prayers, and make their children a blessing in their home? By these lines He is calling to you as He called to the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" Arise from thy sin! Arise from a misspent life! Arise from apathy and sloth and self-indulgence! Arise and live! Arise and rejoice the hearts of those who pray for thee! Arise and shine for the glory of God, the welfare of His Church, and the good of multitudes to whom you may be a blessing. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

There is one further thought with which I will conclude this chapter.

When Christ would give the brightest

jewel, the pearl of all His parables, when He would set before us a picture of Divine love scarcely equalled in the whole Scripture, who is the central figure of the story? Who is the one so lovingly welcomed and on whom such abundant tokens of tenderness are bestowed? Is it not on a young man? He forsakes his home, wastes his substance in riotous living, sinks deep in the mire of vice and ungodliness, and at length awakes from his dream to find himself in poverty, rags, and wretchedness. But he remembers the home of his childhood, a father's kindness, and the abundance of a father's board. So he makes a resolve. He will tarry no longer in the far country, but will return at once and throw himself at his father's feet. He said to himself, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He said it, and he kept his word. He turned his back for ever on the dark past, on former habits, on old companions, on his own thoughts and ways, and went back. And what then?

Did the father spurn and reject him? Did he receive him with cold looks and harsh, upbraiding words? Nay, you know otherwise. Long, long ere he reaches the father's door, the loving embrace, the kiss of forgiveness, the best robe, the shoes, the ring, the sumptuous feast, the gladness which had a beginning but no ending—all this was for the one aforetime so lost, so wretched, so utterly undone because of his sin.

You too may have gone far astray, but in this story, you see, there is good-will toward you. It tells you of the tender loving-kindness of Him who spake this parable. And is not your Heavenly Father waiting and watching for your return? Is there not abundant mercy and grace in store for you, if you will accept it? Oh, come and taste the goodness of the Lord! All heaven shall rejoice over you, and welcome you to their fellowship of love and joy. Scarlet sins shall be made white as snow, and such good things shall be yours as have never entered into the heart of man.

V.

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

INSCRIBED in very large letters around a young men's reading-room was this motto: "*He that knows everything, and knows not Jesus Christ, knows nothing.*"

At the present day there is in many quarters a great thirst for knowledge. Young men who want to get on in life join evening classes in science, or art, or modern languages. All over the land there is a great stir about education. Schools are multiplied everywhere, free libraries are established in our large towns, and a considerable number of persons read books which require some effort to master.

All this is excellent in its way. For young people to give themselves to careful study and to gain knowledge in secular subjects may be a wonderful help in any position they may hereafter fill. By all

means sharpen the axe and give it a keen edge. By all means polish your sword and keep it bright and sharp. It will have plenty of work to do in the battle of life. A well-cultivated mind, a good store of knowledge, will stand you in good stead in any calling and in any profession. It will also be an immense help when called to do work in Christ's vineyard. As a Sunday-school teacher, as a speaker or preacher, or a visitor amongst the poor or rich, you can make instruction in God's Word far more interesting if you can illustrate it by knowledge acquired beforehand by painstaking, diligent study.

But after all, comparing one with another, there is no knowledge like the knowledge of God in Christ. All else is iron, copper, brass, or at best only silver, but this is gold, fine gold, yea, more precious than rubies or diamonds. All else is of earth, but this is of heaven. All else can only tell us of God's marvellous works, but this tells us of God Himself as our Maker, Redeemer, and King. Other knowledge may add to your comfort and prosperity and usefulness, but this gives

the secret of peace in the darkest hours and of a life beyond the grave. An old prophet puts it very forcibly. Of human wisdom, of might and valour, of earthly riches, and the like, we may not boast. But to know God, to know Him as loving, just, and righteous, to know Him by personal experience as our Father and our Friend—here is something in which we may rejoice for evermore. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might: let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, and that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jer. ix. 23. 24). In a few words spoken by Christ on the night of His betrayal we have the same truth: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John xvii. 3).

But where can you find this knowledge of the Father and the Son? It is only in the careful searching of Holy Scripture.

Here is the Book whose leaves display
Jesus, the Life, the Truth, the Way.
Read it with diligence and prayer ;
Search it, and you shall find Him there.

At the Paris Exhibition a young Russian nobleman, Prince Galitzin, received a copy of the New Testament. He had never possessed one before, and he read it carefully day by day. It led him, through the teaching of the Spirit, to see Christ as his Saviour and to give himself to His service. Since then he has been the means of leading his mother to the Saviour, and has consecrated his fortune and his life to spread the Holy Scriptures through the vast country to which he belongs.

If, therefore, you want true knowledge, seek it in the treasure-field of the Word. Dig out the precious ore of Divine truth, and keep it safe when you have found it. Take your Bible into your chamber, and never let a day pass without thinking over a few verses, not forgetting a short prayer that you may be able to understand and practise it. Each morning take fast hold of some thought, some promise, or precept,

or saying of the Master, and think of it during the day.

Some thirty years ago I knew a friend who seldom read the newspaper, but who *worked hard in two gardens*. A little while ago I chanced to meet him on board a steamer; so I asked him if he still followed his old plan, and I found he did. I fancy he has found a long spell of good health from his daily toil among the flowers and plants, and no less spiritual health and comfort from his frequent diggings in the garden of Holy Scripture.

But what is that knowledge of God in Christ which is "life eternal"? There is a knowledge which brings but little comfort. You may possess an accurate knowledge of the letter of Holy Scripture; you may know something of the doctrines taught by Christ and His Apostles, and yet know nothing of the peace and consolation they afford. I want you to go beyond this. I want you so to know Christ, and the Father through Him, that you may find true heart-rest here, and reach at length the mansions of the Home beyond.

tasted His goodness, there has been a joy and value in life which it never possessed before. And there has been a transforming effect on your own character. By His Spirit something of His mind and image has been formed in you. His meekness, His unselfishness, His prayerfulness, His hatred of evil, have found at least a feeble counterpart in your own breast. You long for them and desire to cultivate them. Men "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus," for they can discern some faint rays of His love and holiness in your walk and conversation. Here is the very hinge of eternal life. Here is that knowledge, and faith, and love which alone bring peace to the soul.

Nor let us forget that this knowledge cometh from above. It comes not by any natural light, but by the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost. None can give it but He alone. The very same fiat of almighty power which once went forth over the chaos and darkness that reigned on earth,—“Let there be light, and there was light,”—this same word must go forth again for the enlightening of the soul of man.

What saith the Apostle Paul? "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

And who can tell the comfort this knowledge brings in any sudden emergency or imminent danger? A young man of seventeen, staying by the sea-coast, had gone out amongst the rocks for a quiet study of his Bible, and he was surrounded by the waves before he was aware of danger. When he discovered the great peril to which he was exposed, he took out his Bible, and wrote the following words on the fly-leaf:—

"In danger, I now declare that I do trust in Jesus as my own Saviour, and have trusted for about five years. I know that my sins of heart and action are many and grievous. But now I do pray to God to forgive me for the sake of the perfect righteousness of Christ, and to help me to do His will, and receive me to safety and holiness with Himself. I ask God to bless my father and mother, and give them His

Holy Spirit, and to keep all my brothers and sisters in His faith and fear.

"CLEMENT LAYTON."

Blessed testimony! Here is peace, whatever may come, knowing Jesus, trusting in Him, and still looking to Him for renewed pardon and help, even to the end, and then safe in Him, and with Him for ever more.

Permit me here to press home a personal question. Have you this knowledge, my brother? Has the light entered, and shown you the darkness of former days? Has the Gospel message come home to your own heart and conscience in the power of the Holy Ghost? Do you know God as your most loving Father in Christ?

Do you know Christ as your Friend, your Mediator, your Advocate? Do you trust Him, and love Him, and follow Him? Do you go to Him in prayer, and speak to Him as though you could see Him in the room with you? Do you grow in conformity to His mind and will, and find a joy and comfort in His presence with you? Do you know Him? Or are you

as yet a stranger to His grace? Nothing will suffice in place of this knowledge. You may be a member of a pure and scriptural branch of Christ's Church. You may hold clear views on certain disputed points. You may be a strong Evangelical, or a warm adherent of some other school in the Church. You may be most strict and careful in your attendance on the means of grace. You may be moral, and kind, and amiable, and attentive to your duties at home and at your work. You may be a Communicant, a Sunday-school teacher, or a worker in some other way in Christ's vineyard. You may be reckoned a Christian by all who know you. But what about this one thing? Do you indeed know Christ? Do you believe in Him? Have you eternal life through Him?

Consider this well. If it be true that to know the Father and the Son is "*life eternal*," it is no less true that to be without this knowledge is *eternal death*. And what is this eternal death but to abide under the wrath of God now, and at last to have your portion in the dread prison-house of the lost? At the present time

men are too apt to cast aside the view of "eternal judgment," which has so distinct and prominent a place in Holy Scripture.

God "willeth not the death of a sinner," but if the sinner will hold fast by his sin and despise the mercy of the Most High, he must take the consequences. Now is the day of life and salvation, but beyond the grave there are no pardons; and he who rejects God's mercy in this life and yet hopes to be saved in the next will find out his mistake and rue it eternally. In the depths of hell you will have none to blame but yourself. May God give you wisdom to forsake "the broad way" while you may, and you shall never know that unutterable despair of the self-destroyer.

But if in any measure you have already learnt to know the Lord, let it be your constant aim to increase in this knowledge. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Like Paul, "count all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge." Cultivate close and constant communion with Christ. The more you are with a

person the better you will know him. And the more you come to Christ in prayer and abide with Him by steadfast faith, the higher attainments you will make in heavenly knowledge. In the early morning get time for converse with Him. Believe that He is waiting for you, ready to give you help and blessing for the day. At midday, see if you cannot secure a few moments to be alone with Him. In walking home at the dinner-hour, try to lift up your heart to Him, if you cannot get the opportunity otherwise. Then at night close the day with Jesus. Don't let fatigue or weariness rob you of a short season of quiet, earnest prayer. It need not be long, but let it be real. Thus will you enjoy the Saviour's presence and learn to know Him more and more. The following lines may help you as to the life you should live in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

RULES FOR DAILY LIFE.

*Begin the day with God ;
Kneel down to Him in prayer :
Lift up thy heart to His abode,
And seek His love to share.*

Open the Book of God,
And read a portion there,
That it may hallow all thy thoughts
And sweeten all thy care.

Go through the day with God,
Whate'er thy work may be ;
Where'er thou art, at home, abroad,
He still is near to thee.

Converse in mind with God,
Thy spirit heavenward raise :
Acknowledge every good bestowed,
And offer grateful praise.

Conclude the day with God ;
Thy sins to Him confess :
Trust in the Lord's atoning blood,
And plead His righteousness.

Lie down at night with God,
Who gives His servants sleep ;
And when thou tread'st the vale of death,
He will thee guard and keep.

VI.

"FOUND IN A DESERT LAND."

MANY and various are the ways by which the Good Shepherd follows His wanderers and brings them back to His fold. Sometimes he awakens a man by a serious illness, sometimes by the death of a friend, sometimes by some special sin into which he has fallen. I have known one who swore a terrible oath, but the recollection of it followed him and would allow him no peace. "Oh, that oath!" was all that he could think of, till it led him to the Saviour's feet.

But the case to which I refer was of a different character. A careless young officer in India went with some friends into the jungle to shoot tigers, but in some way, late in the day, he missed his companions and was left all alone. He made every effort to find his way out, but all in

vain. He fired off all his ammunition in the hope of finding some one to guide him, but without result. He realised the perilous position in which he was placed, but determined to sell his life as dearly as possible. Night was fast approaching, so he chose a tree in which he might escape the larger beasts, but he feared the jackals might attack him in such numbers that he should find it difficult to meet them. At least, however, he would do what he could. Before he climbed the tree he thought he would pray for God's help, though for years he had not done so. He remembered a prayer which his mother had taught him in his early days, and this he repeated till he came to the words, "Forgive me all my sins, for Jesus Christ's sake." At that moment all the sins of his life stood out before him as in a panorama. One by one he could recall the sins of past years. Whatever he had said or done amiss came back to his remembrance. He could not get quit of it. So again and again he offered the petition, "Forgive me all my sins, for Jesus Christ's sake." Then he arose from his knees and

it was quite dark. Shortly afterwards he heard the sound of a rifle, and he answered by a shout which was heard by his friends; who had come to seek him. Thus he was saved from the danger that he feared. More than this, his earnest prayer was heard, and he learned that evening a lesson he never forgot, so that in a double sense was fulfilled to him the word once spoken of Israel, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness" (Deut. xxxii. 10). He was found by his friends and saved from great peril, and he was found by the Good Shepherd and saved to eternal life. The story has its lessons. Let us try to gather one or two.

Christ often finds His lost ones in some desert land. Here it was in the lonely jungle, but not seldom is it in the desolation of a bereaved home, in the solitude of the sick chamber, or when for some other cause a man is thrown much upon himself, and he is obliged to think of his true position. I know a friend whose lot was to go and live in a small village, where he had scarcely a soul to converse with. At the same time the faithful Pastor of the

village preached most clearly on the sinfulness and corruption of the human heart. Thus the providence of God and His Spirit worked together, and led my friend to seek and find One who can heal our infirmities, and whose presence can console us in our most desolate hours.

If at any time you are brought into a position where you feel very lonely, and are at a distance from those you love, see if the Lord has not a special message for you. If yet a stranger to His love, is He not in this way calling you to Himself? If you have already learnt to love Him, is He not calling you to a nearer and closer fellowship than ever before?

May we not see also the exceeding value of a mother's piety, and of the prayers and lessons she may have taught her children? It was the remembrance of a prayer taught him many years before which was so specially useful to this young man in that dark hour.

Can you look back on anything of this kind? Have you in your keeping a mother's photograph, which, whenever you look at it, reminds you of good words of

love and kindly counsel given you in times past? Perhaps now she is resting in her grave, and you are thrown into the midst of life's duties and temptations. Are you following her to the better land? Are you living as she often prayed you might? Does the thought of all she was and did for you keep you back from evil and stir you up to love and serve the Saviour?

But the one lesson I want you to learn more than all else is to hearken to the voice of conscience. Never, never stifle it. It was the conviction of sin, the thought of the evil he had done, which led this young officer so earnestly to seek forgiveness. And if at any time the Spirit of God reminds you of former sins, however painful it may be, regard it as a most precious boon. Do not despise the impression, but cherish and cultivate it. Track your sin to its hiding-place. Search it out and look it in the face. Far better that the serpent should be discovered and brought out into the light of day than hidden in your bosom or in some secret corner of your heart. Out with it, however deadly, however strong, yea, however enticing. Out with it, and

- bring it into Christ's presence, that He may
- slay your enemy and save your soul alive.

What has been your own besetting sin? Has it been pride or self-will? Has it been some form of self-indulgence that you know is wrong? Has it been the neglect of some duty or a lack of genuine straightforwardness? Has it been evil-speaking, or envy, or a bitter, revengeful spirit against some one whom you think has wronged you? Talk to yourself about it, and see what has been contrary to God's will. Think over the places where you have lived, the scenes you have frequented, the houses in which you have resided, the workshop or office in which you have toiled, the rooms in which you have slept, the friends and companions whom you have known, and quietly consider with yourself how you have spoken and acted in each case, and what has been thought of you by those whose opinion you can respect. Such a review as this will do you good and not harm; it will give you a truer view of your own character. Perhaps it may open the door to a new life. For if Christ

reveals to you your sin by His Spirit, He will most gladly also reveal to you His free mercy and salvation.

And whatever tale conscience may tell of "things done that ought not to have been done," or "things left undone that ought to have been done," let it only lead you the more speedily to return to God.

"Come home, come home, from the sorrow and blame,
From the sin and the shame, and the tempter that smiled,
Oh, prodigal child, come home, come home!"

The young officer found pardon and peace beneath the tree in the jungle, and you may find it beneath the tree of the Cross. Breathe there the voice of humble confession and earnest prayer. Exercise a sure faith in God's forgiving mercy through Christ's blood. Take for your encouragement the "faithful saying" of the Apostle Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." What a grand old saying this is! What a pillar of hope and consolation to every anxious soul! I suppose it was a saying often on the lips of the first Christians.

Then Paul takes it up and stamps it with the seal of the Great King, and sends it all through the world and through the coming centuries to do its blessed work.

There are some sayings which the sooner they are forgotten the better. Here is one that ought to be for ever laid up in the memory of each believing soul. There are some sayings that ought never to be repeated, as they can do nothing but harm. Here is one that we ought to spread far and wide, till every child of Adam has heard the joyful sound. There are some sayings that we cannot credit. An old proverb tells us, "They say so, is half a liar." But this saying is faithful and true. It rests on the sure word of Him that cannot lie. Some sayings have an interest only for a few whom they specially concern. Here is a saying that has to do with every soul of man, for all are sinners, and all need a Saviour's grace. Some sayings tell of trouble and loss and disappointment. But this saying tells of a benefit, the greatest beyond all comparison that man can possibly receive. It tells of salvation from the penalty of sin.

All is remitted through Christ's work to him who trusts in His name. It tells of salvation from the power of sin. For Christ saves from sin, and not in sin. He sends his Good Spirit, and breaks the chain of every evil habit. It tells of salvation to the uttermost. Where Christ saves, He saves completely and for ever more. He saves through seas of troubles and temptations, from which no mortal power can deliver. He saves the once guilty and lost one, till He sets him, without spot and blemish, before His throne for ever.

My young friend, if you wish for a life of true peace, receive this saying and act upon it at once. In common life many a message or piece of information calls for immediate action, or the whole benefit is lost. There is a great and sudden rise in prices in the business in which you are engaged; there is a valuable property to be obtained on unusually favourable terms; there is an opportunity for a partnership or a vacancy in some post which would be a capital thing for a young man in your position, and if you take steps at

once you may obtain it. But just take it easy, leave it for a few days, and your chance is gone, and likely enough you may never have another so good. This saying, in the same way, calls for immediate action. It offers to you a full and immediate salvation simply as a sinner, on no other footing than that you have a great debt of sin, and that you can do nothing to save yourself. You have but to hearken, to accept, this free offer of grace and mercy, casting away the thought of all self-merit, and relying entirely upon Christ's name. But the time is limited. For you it may be but a single day or a single hour. The favourable moment may slip by. You may lose your life by accident or disease, or even whilst living you may lose your power of thought or reason. Or the Great King may come in his chariot-cloud, and the door of hope may be for ever closed. Or you may quench and grieve the Holy Spirit who is now pleading with you. The voice of sin may drown the voice of conscience. The iron fetters of evil habits may so bind the soul that you may have neither

the power nor desire to change. In "A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains" there is one of the saddest stories I ever read. "Mountain Jim" had been for years a wild desperado, and had been concerned in terrible crimes committed in that wild region. He was dreaded by all the settlers, and in his "ugly fits" was capable of any violence. But Miss Bird tried hard to win him to a better life. He was always courteous and considerate to ladies, and he had helped her several times in difficult expeditions. Once or twice he opened out to her something of his past career. When about eighteen he had been thwarted by his mother in some love affair, and then he gave way to drink, forsook his home, and yielded himself to the power of evil in every shape. But now, though conscience was awake, he cast away all thought of a new life. His words give a fearful example of the peril of a sinful course.

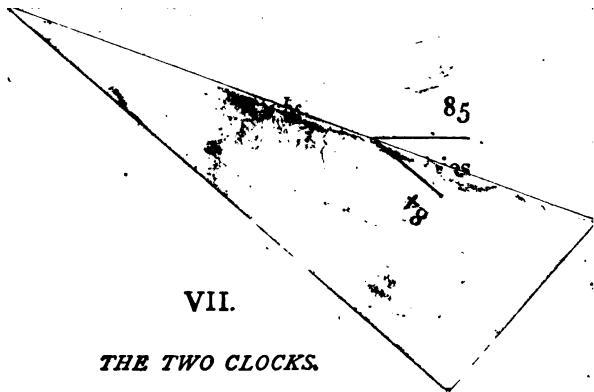
"Now you see a man who has made a devil of himself. Lost! lost! lost! I believe in God. I've given Him no choice but to put me with the devil and his angels. I'm afraid to die. You've

stirred the better nature in me too late. I can't change. If ever a man was a slave, I am. Don't speak to me of repentance and reformation; I can't reform."

Oh, my young friends! if you are treading the downward path, your case in the end may be like this man's. You may see your awful doom but be unable to escape it. You may feel your fetters but be unable to break them. You may so reject the mighty power of the Divine Spirit that every hope and thought of a better life may be gone. Therefore turn now. Tarry not; wait not an hour or a moment. The door is yet open. Christ calls you to Himself. His promise is yet for you—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

"In no wise cast thee out!" The words are spoken,
And, Jesus, never can Thy word be broken.
Here then I lay me down and take my rest,
Calm as an infant on its mother's breast.

"In no wise cast thee out!" I need not care
To seek in this dark heart what is not there;
Alike from good or ill in self I flee,
To find my righteousness, my all, in Thee."



VII.

THE TWO CLOCKS.

I HAVE seen something of a parable of life in two clocks which are not very distant one from the other.

One of them stands in an excellent position, perhaps the most prominent corner in the whole town where I saw it, at the meeting of three streets, and visible from the large Market Square. But for many a long year this particular clock failed to use its privilege in giving the right time to the passers-by. Many a one would look up inquiringly into its face, but it had no answer to give. From the carelessness of its owner and from the works being out of order, at twenty minutes past four it stood for five or six years at least. Besides this, it looked altogether in a dilapidated and disreputable condition for a clock in such a capital position and in

at large and increasing town—the long hand being partly broken, and it was plain that no one had for a long time taken the trouble to clean away the dust and dirt which covered its face.

The other clock was rather in a quieter position, but not more than thirty or forty yards away from its neighbour. But it was in every respect a great contrast. Its bright, intelligent-looking face, especially when illuminated, as you see it each evening, its clear gilt figures on the dial, and its hands always on the move, tell a very different tale to its dull, sleepy-looking companion a few doors off. I have often proved it as thoroughly trustworthy, It never deceives you, but always tells the plain, honest truth. Whether you are going to business, or by train, or to meet a friend, follow its guidance and you are safe. I don't fancy it has ever yet told a lie, and as long as it is fairly dealt with, I don't suppose it ever will.

Now I look upon these two clocks as giving a good illustration, on the one hand, of a very useless, and, on the other, of a very useful young man. Here is

a young man with very great opportunities of doing good, and of filling an important situation with great advantage to himself and to others. He has had a good education and has good connections, and if only he minds what he is about, he has a fair prospect before him. But he has no energy, and makes no effort in his calling or profession. He is an idler and a loiterer in a busy world. So he falls behind in the race, and those who look to him for help are sorely disappointed. There is something in his appearance, too, that is not prepossessing. You are not long in finding out why he left his last place and cannot obtain another. *He never keeps true time.* Half an hour late when punctuality is all important, he gets a bad name, and does not easily lose it. And it is not unlikely that he soon sinks far lower than this. When he has lost his character, it is but one step further to positive crime. Perhaps before long he is found within a prison cell.

But the main lesson I should like you to gather is this—*Let there be no standing still.* Time is too precious to waste,

and drones will not be allowed to taste much of the honey. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Whatever be your calling, be thorough and earnest in carrying it out. I once knew a man who in early life threw away his chances of rising. He never would give his mind to anything requiring toil and effort. He was a clergyman's son, and his brother went to the university and attained a good position, but this young man would take to nothing, and would do nothing but stroll about the country and depend upon his father to support him. After his father's death, he was compelled to do something for his daily bread, and the last time I saw him he was working as a railway porter. Far, far otherwise might have been his position had he only given himself to some useful work.

But I like to look at the pleasant lesson the other clock teaches us. Remember that I said it was *illuminated*. What a blessed thing it is for a young man to have the true illumination, the teaching of God's Spirit and the knowledge of

God's Holy Word! To have the mind enlightened, to see the realities of sin and righteousness, and the comfort of a Father's love, and the joy of Christ's service, and the beauty of a holy life—to know all this gives a power for good that you never can have without it. You may wisely offer such a prayer as that of David: "Oh, send out Thy light and thy truth; let them lead me."

And when you begin here, like my friend the clock, carry a bright, cheery face. Let your religion be thoroughly genial, and hearty, and attractive. Ever remember that the religion of the New Testament is the most joyous, lightsome, hopeful thing in all the world, and don't misrepresent it by yielding to gloomy feelings or by looking as if you had "the blues." "Rejoice in the Lord always." Though, like other people, you have your times of trouble and difficulty, believe what you profess, that God cares for you, and that those who fear the Lord shall want no good thing. I want you also to be thoroughly dependable. Here is the great point. You may be in a quiet, humble rank of life, or you

may be in a more prominent one, but let everything about you make it as clear as the daylight that you can be depended upon. Whatever you say, whatever you undertake, whatever work you have to do or engagement you form, let there be no mistake about this, that as far as you are concerned, no one will ever be disappointed or deceived. Give up any pleasure, put up with any inconvenience, rise early and toil late, rather than fail any one who relies upon you. Such young men there are here and there, though not very many, I am afraid; but they have their reward, and it is no small one. For a time they may have great difficulties to contend with, but in the end they come forth as gold out of the furnace.

I knew such a young man years ago, and have often spoken of him as an example to others. One night he came to me wishing to know how he might become a true Christian. He had tried in various ways, but he always failed, and he wanted to know what he should do. I gave him the best advice in my

power. I told him, for one thing, to go on his knees and speak to the Saviour as if he could see Him with his very eyes, and to ask Him for pardon through His blood, and the teaching and help of His Spirit to guide and strengthen him. The next time I saw him he told me that he feared his heart was "too wicked to receive the grace of God." But I bade him go on, as the Lord was doubtless showing him his sin, and would give him peace and comfort in His own time. By and by the light burst through the cloud, and he rejoiced in Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour.

But he had a great struggle. He was in a shop where not one in the establishment had the least fear of God before his eyes. So he had no sympathy within doors, and very much opposition. He was often expected to do that which his own conscience condemned. But he would not do it. He would not mix water with the milk, nor call Dutch butter London, nor tell lies about the fruit or the game, nor make out the bills on the Sunday morning. He would do all he could that

he felt right, but would not soil his hands by any wilful dishonesty, nor pollute his tongue by falsehood, nor lose the blessedness of God's holy day.

One day his master was speaking about him. "I have no fault to find with William, except that he is a great deal too religious."

After a time William thought it best to seek another situation where he might avoid the temptations to which he was exposed. At my request a Christian tradesman took him into his shop, and after he had been with him more than five years, his master told me that all the time he had found William a great treasure, and that in every respect he had found him worthy of all confidence.

Surely such a character is worth having. Strive that it may be yours. When placed in scenes of temptation, such as this young man was at first, be firm as a rock, and don't budge an inch from the straight road of integrity and uprightness. Have nothing to do with deception, and business-lies and double-dealing. Lose a situation nay, lose every farthing you have, and even

life itself, rather than lose peace of conscience and the assurance of God's favour. You will find it a good bargain in the end, though it requires much faith to realise it.

Blessed rule and safest guiding,
Inward peace and inward light,
Star upon our path abiding—
"Trust in God and do the right."

Such a line of conduct not only brings great peace of mind, but it also becomes a guiding light to those around. The clock that was always going and that always kept right time was able to guide many in the course of the day. It was a real friend and helper to those who needed it. And a godly, consistent young man, who serves God whatever it may cost him, will not live many years without making many others see the reality of religion, and that it is possible to do right even when the current runs strong in an opposite direction. Thousands may thank you hereafter for setting them an example they might safely follow. "A faithful man shall abound with blessings;" and this is not the least—to uphold the wavering, to strengthen the weak, and to assist other

young travellers in trampling down the briars and thorns that beset them.

Before I close this chapter, in all honesty there is one word more I am bound to say.

The clock that never went for so many years has latterly mended its ways. A new long hand has been substituted for the broken one, the face has been cleaned, the works set right, and it now seems to do its work fairly well. And if some young friend is conscious that days and years have been lost, yet you need not lose hope, if only you desire a change. Make a second start. The old Bow bells seemed to ring out, "Turn again, Whittington! turn again, Whittington!" So I say to you, "Turn again! turn again!" The battle is not lost yet. You may yet rise up and do a good day's work in life and leave a blessing behind you. Listen to the voice of thy Saviour. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help" (Hos. xiii. 9). Come to Him and He will help thee and strengthen thee in the right path. "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and He shall save the humble person."

VIII.

BITTEN BY FOUR RATTLESNAKES.

IN tropical climates there is often found to be exceeding peril to life from the multitude of reptiles and the wounds they inflict. In India alone the danger from snake-poison is greater than from any other natural cause. In a single year seventeen thousand persons are known to have perished through their bite.

In view of this terrible evil, a brave doctor set himself to discover a means by which the body might be rendered proof against the deadly effects of their poison. Having procured one of these rattlesnakes suited to his purpose, he prepared himself by certain remedies, and then permitted himself to be bitten by it. Trying various

species, he made the experiment no less than four times, more than once bringing himself into the extremest danger in consequence of the poison he had imbibed.

It was a rare example of devotion to the call of duty and of willingness, if need, to lose his own life in the desire to save the lives of hundreds and of thousands.

Would that more were willing in this spirit to do good to their fellow-creatures, and putting all thought of self aside, to live or die for the welfare of the bodies or souls of those around them!

Nor should we fail to be reminded of the Great and Good Physician, who was wounded and suffered even unto death, that He might thus rescue and save perishing sinners from the venom and poison of the old serpent, the devil, and preserve them unto life everlasting.

But the thought of this brave, self-sacrificing man, led my thoughts to something else. It led me to think of those who give themselves up to be bitten where there is no possible good to be obtained, but only

dire, terrible injury and evil to themselves, and many beside. Ah! there are deadly reptiles, adders, serpents, rattlesnakes, or whatever else you may call them, whose venom and poison touches both body and soul. Instead of yielding to their influence, your only wise plan is to flee from them and keep as far from them as you can.

Let me name four of these deadly foes. May every young man who reads these pages be kept from their power! Horse-racing and gambling, theatre-going, the snare of strong drink, and profligate habits—these four slay their thousands and tens of thousands of young men in every grade of society, engulfing them in moral ruin, blasting all their prospects in life, and involving mothers and fathers, wives and children, brothers and sisters, in the misery they have brought upon themselves.

Of these four, I shall speak of the last in another chapter. Let me touch on the other three.

With not a few strong drink is the foe they have most to fear. What a sight it would be if you could gather together the

young men you may see in any large town, wrecks of their former selves, squalid in their dress, hanging about the corner of some low street, with neither life, nor hope, nor energy left! Then ask, as you look at them, "Who slew all these?" It was the dragon of drink that did it. It has blighted their prospects, ruined their health, cast them high and dry on the shore of poverty and want. In face of this great danger, which often lies in wait for the most kindly, genial young fellow, consider well what you ought to do? Might it not be well to join the Temperance army, and, for the sake of others as well as for yourself, deny yourself entirely the use of stimulants? Perhaps you are able to resist the snare, but another may be saved from danger if you abstain. On the other hand, though you may take it in moderation, he may gradually be overcome by the love of drink, and, following your example at first, may at length fall into the very depths of evil. Should you not regret this?

If you could swim well, and plunged into a broad river and reached the other side

in safety, another might be led to attempt it through you, and then be drowned in the endeavour. Should you not reproach yourself as having been the cause of his death?

One thing I am sure of. For the present emergency, whilst this sin is doing such terrible mischief, it is a wise and good thing to keep on the safe side. Neither can you tell how much you may influence others by your own conduct in this matter. But if you are not willing to abstain entirely, I pray you, friend, *keep within the very narrowest limits*. Watch yourself very closely, and keep very far from the brink of the precipice.

What shall I say about a second point? What shall I advise as to frequenting the theatre, the concert-hall, and similar places of amusement? You may tell me that many respectable, well-meaning people go to them. You may tell me that even clergymen are found in the theatre, and argue in favour of dramatic performances.

However, I must say what I think. As they are at present, and are likely to remain

for many a long year, I believe they do an amount of harm to young people that I could not exaggerate. They bring them into contact with bad company. They stir up evil passions. They deaden and destroy religious impressions. Very careful should you be to cherish and guard every good and holy desire that God may give you. I have seen the blossom on peach and apricot trees carefully covered over with muslin during frosty nights because a single sharp frost may destroy it all. And so, I am sure, we do well to guard the blossoms of piety and religion. Don't let the frost of worldliness and the atmosphere of ungodliness and irreligion hinder the blessed fruit you may bear for Christ. Rather guard it well by such habits and associations as will conduce to your spiritual welfare.

But how often has the theatre been a pitfall to a young man, bringing him down to misery or death! A young man of good prospects in America was persuaded to go to a theatre. The attraction once felt was too powerful to be resisted. For seventeen nights he went almost in succes-

sion, and at the end of that time he had lost character and position, and all peace of mind. It was a fall from which there was no recovery.

Let me mention another case.

An actor was led, in a very remarkable way, to renounce his profession and to enter the ministry of the English Church. He gave up a lucrative employment and became comparatively a poor man. But he found an abundant recompense. In Christ and His cross he found riches far outweighing gold and silver.

One day he was called to see a young gentleman who was dangerously ill. He lay on a luxurious couch, surrounded by every indication of wealth. With difficulty of utterance he said to the clergyman: "You have come to see the wreck you have made. You have ruined me," he said. "Here on this sick bed I lie, prayerless, Christless, dying! You have done it. Thrall'd by your power, I followed you like a slave, until I was happy nowhere but in the atmosphere of that accursed theatre. It has drained me of every good, sapped my virtue, and destroyed my soul. I have lost

all that makes men honoured," he added. "I might have lived years, long years. But I am going to the grave a shame, and a grief to my mother, a disgrace to my name. And lying here, day after day, I have thought how through you I learned to love the enticements of the stage."

At length he died, not without hope. The one who formerly led him into evil, led him at last to the Saviour. The stage ruined him, but Christ saved him and enabled him to rest his soul on Him.

But side by side with the theatre goes the excitement of gambling. Of this too I must speak, and at some length.

Betting and gambling in every form and shape is injurious and ought to be avoided. Whether it be at the billiard-table or in a rubber of whist, on the race-course or elsewhere, nothing good will ever come of it. Many have seen the pictures, a year or two ago, in the Royal Academy called "The Gamester's Course." The young man at college takes the first step by betting on horses for the Derby, then step by step he is drawn on till he loses everything, and at length in an attic, where

nothing but utter poverty stares him in the face, is seen the pistol with which he takes his life. It is an evil which takes such a firm grip of a young man. Like the cobra, it coils round him, and he cannot get free. If he wins, it urges him on to win more. If he lose, he will often borrow, beg, or steal, in the hope of making up for what he has lost.

It is a pursuit which becomes so engrossing, that a man cares for little else. After a time, when the victim of this vice is thoroughly bitten, everything else in common life seems too tame for him to give much thought to it. Plain business duties, which are the surest road to an honest livelihood, are neglected or slurred over; no pains and trouble are taken about the details of the shop or the warehouse; so everything soon goes to rack and ruin, whilst a man is off to some race or discussing some coming event with sporting companions.

It makes a man so utterly selfish. He never stops for a moment to think of the wives and children of those from whom he may win a large sum. He never thinks

of the misery he is bringing on those who are dependent upon him, when risking the money which has to provide all they need. Too often the betting man, with the iron hoof of covetousness, tramples down all thought of charity, of kindly feeling, yea, often even of truth, justice, and fair play, going all lengths to fill his coffers with money which does not belong to him.

I quote the words of one who had a very large heart for young men, and wrote from considerable knowledge of the turf: "Betting and gambling of every kind is in itself wrong and immoral. Betting is wrong, because it is wrong to take your neighbour's money without giving him anything in return. Earn from him what you will, and as much as you can; all labour, even the lowest drudgery, is honourable; but betting is not labouring nor earning: it is getting money without earning it; and more, it is getting money, or trying to get it, out of your neighbour's ignorance."

If you and he bet on any event, you think your horse will win: he thinks that his will: in plain English, you think that

you know more about the matter than he ; you try to take advantage of his ignorance, and so to conjure money out of his pocket into yours—a very noble and friendly attitude in which to stand to your neighbour, truly !

That is the plain English of it : and look at it upwards, downwards, sideways, inside out, you will never make anything out of betting, save this—that it is taking advantage of your neighbour's supposed ignorance.

But says some one: "That is all fair ; he is trying to do as much by me."

Just so, and that is a very noble attitude for two men who have no spite against each other—a state of mutual distrust and unmercifulness, looking each selfishly to his own gain, regardless of the interest of the other. Thus betting is founded on selfishness, and the consequence is that men who live by betting are, and cannot help being, the most selfish of men, and, I should think, the most unhappy and pitiable ; for if a man who is given up to selfishness, distrust, and cunning—who is tempted every hour to treachery and false-

hood, without the possibility of one noble or purifying feeling, or the consciousness that he has done the slightest good to a human being,—if that man is not a pitiable object, I know not what is.

I hold, then, that betting is more or less wrong and immoral, but it is no less foolish.

Young men stake their money on this horse or that. "They know what the horse has done already." "They have special information, and have heard some wonderful secrets." "They send their money to a prophet in the sporting paper, in whom they have the highest confidence; or perhaps a young man "has a private friend, who is connected with Lord So-and-So's table, and he has put him up to a thing or two."

Ah! beguiled by their own folly. In nine cases out of ten it is all a mistake, and you learn too late to rue the money you have cast away.

The following letter to his son, a public-school boy, was written by Canon Kingsley, from whose words of advice the previous extracts have been taken.

"MY DEAREST BOY,—There is a matter which gave me much uneasiness when you mentioned it. You said you had put into some lottery for the Derby and had hedged to make safe.

"Now all this is bad, bad, nothing but bad. Of all habits, gambling is the one I hate most and have avoided most. Of all habits, it grows most on eager minds. Success and loss alike make it grow. Of all habits, however much civilised men may give way to it, it is one of the most intrinsically *savage*. Historically it has been the peace excitement of the lowest brutes in human form for ages past. Morally it is unchivalrous and unchristian.

"1. It gains money by the lowest and most unjust means, for it takes money out of your neighbour's pocket without giving him anything in return.

"2. It tempts you to use what you fancy your superior knowledge of a horse's merits—or anything else—to your neighbour's harm.

"If you know better than your neighbour, you are bound to give him your advice. Instead, you conceal your knowledge to win from his ignorance; hence come all sorts of concealments, dodges, deceptions—I say the Devil is the only father of it. . . .

"I hope you have not won. I should not be sorry for you to lose. If you have won I shall not congratulate you. If you wish to please me, you will give back to its lawful owners the money you have won.

"Recollect always that the stock argument is worthless. It is this: 'My friend would win from me if he could, *therefore* I have an equal right to

win from him.' Nonsense. The same argument would prove that I have a right to maim or kill a man if only I give him leave to maim or kill me if he can and will.

"I have spoken my mind once and for all on a matter on which I have held the same views for more than twenty years, and trust in God you will not forget my words in after-life. I have seen many a good fellow ruined by finding himself one day short of money, and trying to get a little by play or betting—and then the Lord have mercy on his simple soul, for simple it will not remain long.

"Mind, I am not the least *angry* with you. Betting is the way of the world. So are all the seven deadly sins under certain rules and pretty names, but to the Devil they lead if indulged in, in spite of the wise world and its ways.—Your loving father,

C. KINGSLEY."

Two instances from real life may illustrate the reality of this evil. The first is from Paris, given as printed in the daily paper; the second from our own country.

"A few days ago a miserably-clad man was picked up in the streets insensible and conveyed to the hospital. Restoratives were administered, and when the poor creature was able to articulate a word he explained that nothing had passed his lips for several days, and that he had fainted away from inanition. An hour later he expired. The police charged with the duty of establishing his identity

discovered that he belonged to a good family and had formerly possessed a fine fortune. This he had entirely squandered at gambling-tables, but until about fifteen years ago he had contrived to keep himself above absolute beggary. At that epoch he lost at Baden-Baden three hundred thousand francs in one day, and was left almost penniless. He had a wife living and two sons established in business, but shame or pride prevented him from applying to them, and he took to the streets as a beggar. This had been his calling for twelve years, the alms given him being used to satisfy his ruling passion at some of the low *tripots* still to be found in Paris, in spite of the vigilance of the authorities. Ultimately he died of hunger, and his family having been apprised of the event, he was buried in the family vault of Père la Chaise."

Another example from real life, for the exact truth of which I can vouch, may serve instead of many words to show young men that I am drawing no fancy picture in speaking of the fatal character of gambling.

A man in a middle rank of life had worked hard and made his way. He had carefully brought up his two sons and settled them out in life. For the elder he purchased a junior partnership in a wholesale business, and became surety for the

younger in the situation where he placed him.

But this terrible vice laid hold of both. Horse-racing, billiards, and bad connections led the elder to rob his partner. To cover and conceal the crime the aged father and mother sold their houses and went into lodgings with an income reduced to £70 per annum, both of them verging on seventy years of age.

Scarcely a year passed after this but a second blow came, even heavier than the first. The younger son was charged with forging two cheques, together amounting to nearly £100. Like Absalom, he had no spot or blemish—handsome, clever, and very talented in many ways—but he was godless in the extreme. The tears of that aged man and woman fell fast when sin had smitten their second son. Lodged in one of the cells of a prison, that mother found her boy. It was a terrible meeting. The weather was intensely cold. Christmas day came, and he was waiting his trial. The poor broken-hearted mother left her rooms and her husband, who was lying ill at the time, and through blinding snow

and bitter cold she reached the prison door with a Christmas dinner for her son. When friends dissuaded her from going she said, "It will be the last Christmas dinner he will ever have from his mother's hand, and come what may, I must get to him." Many a bruise did she receive amongst the roughs waiting around the door, which she carried about with her for weeks. The sight of his dear mother on such a morning, her worn-out look, her snow-soaked clothes, and her strong unchanged love toward him, caused him utterly to break down. With intense bitterness he spoke of his past life and the sins he had committed. "Seeing my mother's sufferings and her deep love for me is the most acute punishment I can feel. Would that I had died before I had meddled with sin! Oh, that I could recall the bitter past! *Drink and billiards have led me to this.*"

The trial came on and he was found guilty, and he is still undergoing the sentence passed. His father lies heartbroken in the silent grave. The mother still waits her call, ever thinking and praying for her erring, but still dearly-loved children.

Never did two sons start with better prospects, but all life's hopes marred by sin, and their parents' love repaid by anguish and sorrow that followed them to the grave.

Young man, are you entering upon the same course? Oh, stop at once! Cast off the hateful "viper into the fire" (Acts xxviii. 5). And Christ will heal the wound, and yet make thee blessed and a blessing. Pray for pardon of the past; pray for grace to resist every temptation in the future.

Hear we the Shepherd's voice,
Pray, brother, pray;
Would you His heart rejoice?
Pray, brother, pray;
Sin calls for ceaseless fear,
Weakness needs the Strong One near;
Long as you struggle here,
Pray, brother, pray.

IX.

THE ARROW THAT MISSED THE MARK.

IT was well aimed, the point was dipped in deadly poison, the mark was near, and yet it failed. It might have wrought death to a precious soul, but it was received on a shield that could not be pierced, and a great victory was achieved, which it is well that every young man should remember.

What was the arrow? It was a terrible temptation, forged in hell, that carried with it the venom of the old serpent. Who shot it? A wicked woman, who used her position and influence in the endeavour to ruin one whom she ought to have guarded from harm and danger.

What was the mark? A young man, far from his home, and under the roof of her who would thus have done him a deadly injury.

You know the story well. I speak of

Joseph, and Potiphar's wife, and the noble victory he won.

By every means she endeavoured to entice him. Not once or twice, but again and again, she laid her net to take and ensnare him. She did her utmost to draw him into the sin which he abhorred. But he would not consent to her base proposals. He will neither excuse the sin to himself nor to her. He looks upon it as a black, foul, abominable thing, and a sin both against God and man. He will invent no smooth name to conceal its hideousness. He will hearken to no flattering words which will weaken his resolution. Even when she will almost compel him to evil by laying hold of his garment, he makes haste and flees and gets him out, lest perchance her persuasions should conquer his purpose.

Thank God, what a young man did between three and four thousand years ago, young men may do now. The shield of Joseph's faith could not give way: the breastplate of a righteous determination against evil could not be pierced. So this poisoned dart of the wicked one fell harm-

less at his feet ; nay, indeed, for a season it brought him sorrow and trouble, and yet deliverance even then, and light and joy beyond. Was it not so ? Was it not an unspeakable benefit to Joseph to be freed from her assaults and the misery and fear they must have caused him, though it were at the cost of prison fare and a prison cell ? And was not the prison one appointed step on the road to the palace ? Were not those two long years which he spent there, through his unshaken fidelity to God and his master—were they not happy, peaceful years ? For “the Lord was with Joseph,” and he knew it. And were they not the due preparation and training for his exaltation and the happy and fruitful marriage in store for him ? Ah, God forgets not the young man that rejects temptation, and that sets his face like a flint against the sins to which many yield. Refuse to drink from the fatal, though ensnaring, draught of sinful indulgence, and God can and will put into thy hand one day a far sweeter cup.

When it is for thy true welfare, He will give thee a holy, happy marriage—a union with one who will do thee good and not

harm all the days of thy life. No bitter drop shall be in that cup. No secret remorse, no pang of a guilty conscience, shall be there, but it shall be sweetened by the blessed assurance that a Father's love has prepared it and put it into thine hand.

Why should we fear youth's draught of joy,
If pure, would sparkle less?
Why should the cup the sooner cloy,
Which God hath deigned to bless?

I would ask each one who reads these pages carefully to ponder the words of this brave young hero of olden times :

"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9).

Many plead for vice as a necessity. They assert that it can be no sin to yield to those lusts and passions which belong to our nature.

But is it not the glory of man to exercise self-denial, to curb unruly desires, to let the higher parts of our nature control and subdue the lower appetites? Is the soul to be the slave or the master of the body? Is not daily discipline, daily watchfulness

against wrong thoughts and doings, the only path to a holy and useful life?

God knoweth our frame, but for our health and peace and spiritual growth He sets a limit to our indulgence of those desires which belong to our nature. He forbids adultery. He forbids all unchastity in word or deed. He would have us sober and temperate in all things. The word is plain, and is in accordance with the truest philosophy, and the laws which promote the health of individuals, and the strength and welfare of a nation.

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. xiii. 4). "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, . . . for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. iii. 5). Remember that in deeds of impurity there is a threefold sin.

There is sin against a Holy God.

It is against His plain command, in the Law, in the Gospel, and in the Apostolic Epistles. It is altogether contrary to the

high standard which He has set before us. It is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Even an unchaste look is pronounced by Christ to be adultery. Certainly, therefore, all impurity is forbidden. Those who wilfully yield to it plainly shut the door of heaven against themselves. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. xxi. 27).

There is sin against our fellow-creatures.

Had Joseph yielded, he would have sinned both against Potiphar and the woman who tempted him. He would have wronged his master, and have increased the guilt of his wife.

And if a young man sin in this way, let him never forget that he is ruining another soul as well as his own. Should any one by sweet words allure you into her den of infamy, you are adding another deed of darkness to her debt as well as your own.

And who can tell the awful sin of seducing one who has hitherto been pure and innocent? If the doom of one be more terrible than another, will not the lowest

depths of woe be reserved for those who plunge a young life into untold sorrows, and blast all the fair promise of a happy life? Or, if it be that you should rise again and repent, and live a new life, shall you be ever free from the bitterest remorse if the victim of your sin, as will be most probable, sink deeper and deeper in the mire of iniquity?

My young brother, never, never tempt a young woman into evil. Never by a look, by a word, by a suggestion, turn one such from the plain path of virtue. Never lull your conscience to sleep by the thought that possibly she may marry some one in her own position of life, should she be beneath you in society; or if she be an equal, that you intend to cover your sin by marriage hereafter. Never deceive yourself in this way. Never have the double guilt, the tenfold guilt of dragging down another into the dark gulf where too often a wretched, hopeless life ends in a death-bed of utter despair.

Think, moreover, of the cowardice and meanness of acting in this way. Is it not the strong trampling on the weak? Is it

not taking a base advantage of a kindly feeling towards yourself? Is it not abusing a reliance upon your honourable dealing, and making this very confidence in you a means of undermining all the peace and comfort of her who thus trusts in you? Shame, shame upon the young man who will thus act! Mothers, fathers, scorn such a one, and never let him enter your drawing-room! Oh, that society would act fairly and justly, and if the one is shunned and cast out, let not the other be permitted to pollute those who are yet untainted by vice.

Another point here ought not to be forgotten. Vice acts and reacts on society in a marvellous way. *One sinner destroyeth much good.* The young woman first led into sin by one in a higher position in life, will oftentimes be a means of contaminating many a home! Perhaps as a servant amongst young children—perhaps when sunk as low as woman can,—she may bring deadly injury into the bosom of that rank of society which has dealt far too leniently with him who has wronged her.

Neither ought you to forget that in all unchastity there is *sin against yourself*. You wrong your own soul. You mar and destroy your own peace. You are planting thorns and briars which will be your own scourge. You are surely laying up trouble for yourself in days to come. You contract a blot and a stain on your conscience which may give you many a restless hour. You are robbing yourself of the joy and comfort you might have in a pure and holy marriage. You are sowing the seeds of weakness and disease, and very probably shortening your own life.

Go into that room. You will find it probably down a narrow lane or in a blind alley. It is a place from which the pure and virtuous keep far away. But look, what do you see? *A row of coffins*. Whose are they? *Those of young men*. Whence came their death? *From the pestilential atmosphere of that room*. "*He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.*"

There is one branch of this subject that demands a special word. There are those who would shrink from the evil to which

I have just referred, who nevertheless yield to a very subtle form of the same temptation. It is well known to medical men and those who have the care of youth, that self-abuse proves a terrible snare to many. It creeps into our public schools and enervates a lad, making him listless and feeble, injuring the memory, unfitting him for hard study, not seldom breaking down his health, and destroying all his bright prospects of a useful and honourable career.

Oh, beware of this sin! Watch against its first approach. Be assured that it is most perilous to your welfare, and hateful and offensive in the eyes of Him "from whom no secrets are hid."

If it has already laid hold of you, take counsel with some medical adviser whom you can thoroughly trust. Let not a desire for secrecy lead you to quack remedies, or quack practitioners. Your only safe plan is to confess the cause of your trouble to some one on whom you can rely. Above all, don't play with temptation. Don't think you can break off when you will. The chain will grow

stronger every day. Your only path is entire and immediate renunciation. Now and for ever cast off, in God's strength, the evil habit which has injured you.

This leads me to consider a very practical question. How may you best overcome this fatal snare, whatever form it may assume? How may you gain a victory in the sore battle you may have to wage? I do most deeply feel for many young men who would rather die than wilfully sin, and yet this temptation dogs their steps, and is a continual burden and grief to them. Be assured, my young friend, there are none for whom Christ has a deeper sympathy. Remember that He knows your trial, and thinks of you, and is able to succour you when you are tempted. You are not alone in this battle. Christ is by your side, and in His strength many a young man has fought and conquered the foe.

Here is the first point. You must be in living union with Christ. You must have Him with you. You must have Him dwelling in your heart by His Spirit, as the only power which can beat down this evil.

Without Him you can do nothing, and only in His strength can you effectually conquer.

Another important point is this. You cannot overcome merely by resisting sin. Something higher, better, nobler must lift you above it. *Overcome evil with good.* If you are Christ's, throw yourself heartily into His work. Go where you will find friends and associates whose society will strengthen you in living a godly life. Take up some branch of Christian labour that will stir your sympathies and call forth your hearty efforts. Nothing more tends to foster wrong thoughts and feelings than sloth and indolence, and nothing is a greater help in overcoming them than filling up every spare moment with some useful work.

Plenty of physical exercise is another capital antidote to temptations of this kind. I have spoken of it in a previous chapter, and therefore need only remind you of it. But there is no doubt that the gymnasium is an excellent outlet for youthful vigour, and if used with due care, is very beneficial.

Another practical hint may be given here. The free use of cold water is spe-

cially recommended by medical men. A bath every morning, with the temperature about 60° perhaps, would prove in most cases the best for use throughout the year, and would be an excellent auxiliary in the preservation of health, and also a help against the temptations on which I am dwelling.

No less valuable than physical exercise is mental occupation. In the winter evenings classes for self-improvement are now very common in all our large towns, and if you have the opportunity, you will do well to join them. If these are not available, or scarcely suit you, strive to make work for yourself in some other way. Get hold of books which require some thought to master. Take up some epoch in English history and study it thoroughly. Or give time to Botany or some other natural science, till it becomes a real delight and pleasure to you.

Side by side with these safeguards, lay aside everything which experience tells you has a tendency to increase temptation. Avoid, as most perilous, pictures, books, or papers which suggest impure

and sensual thoughts. Keep far away from scenes where you are likely to hear anything polluting. Prefer quiet pleasures at your fireside and in a pleasant social circle, to the theatre or the dancing-hall. Be careful to avoid stimulants. Very frequently it is under the influence of these that a young man first breaks loose from wholesome restraints. It is then that he breaks down the hedge of moral principle, and afterwards is prepared to go all length in sin.

This leads me to the last point. Most earnestly would I beseech you to avoid the first downward step. Once yield to the Tempter, once overleap the barrier of self-restraint, and the descent to any depth of vice becomes fatally easy. "Flee youthful lusts." Flee from them as from a serpent; flee from this sin as from the sorest plague that can touch you. There is no end to the harm it may do to you in mind and body, as well as to your highest and eternal interests. Boldly and determinately say "No" when any one would bring you under its power. Pray that your thoughts may be kept from evil;

and act in accordance with your prayer. Never utter or hearken to a word that may defile. Stand firm as a rock, and like Joseph hold fast your integrity and maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

And in this matter I should like to say to every Christian young man who reads these pages, *Do not maintain a mere negative attitude in this question.* Be not content with keeping yourself pure, but throw all your influence into the right scale. If there be those who are tempters, soul-murderers, destroyers of the peace of others, be you a firm upholder of all that is pure and holy. If ever it lies in your power, be a shield to any who are tempted, and speak out manfully and boldly against sin.

I have read somewhere of one who did his part bravely in guarding the weak and defending those in peril. He was called "*a brother of all women.*" Wherever he could, he protected them as though they were his own sisters. In many ways you may use influence in this direction. You may aid in checking the spread of pernicious litera-

ture, and in substituting something better in its place. You may be able to put some one who is in danger upon their guard, perhaps through the help of some Christian lady. You may give temporary assistance to some orphan who is likely to fall into the snare unless befriended in the hour of need. You may even be able to do something in forwarding such legislation as may tend to preserve national morality. At least, do something if you can, and it may prove the eternal salvation of a precious soul.

These words may be read by one who has fallen. "I'm down there!" you may say; "how can I rise?"

My brother, never forget there is sure and mighty help for any one who is willing to forsake sin. The Merciful Redeemer comes close to you, even in your misery and sin, and stoops down to lift you up and to deliver you from its guilt and power. Only believe it. Only lift up your eye to Him in faith and self-condemnation, and His hand shall be stretched out to save thee. Many a soldier has been wounded and perhaps left for dead on the

battle-field, and who yet has been healed and has done good service against the enemy. It may be so with you. Continue in sin if you will, and you will find by and by the truth of the proverb, "Reckless youth makes rueful age." But cast off your sin, look for pardon and help to a mighty Saviour, and His hand shall lift you up and break the chain of sin and set you free. Your sin is strong, but Christ is stronger, and through Him you may be more than conqueror; He will keep you from falling, and present you faultless before His glory with exceeding joy.

O Thou, to whose all-searching sight
The darkness showeth as the light,
Search, prove my heart, it pants for Thee:
O burst these bonds and set it free.

Wash out its stains, refine its dross,
Nail my affections to the cross,
Hallow each thought, let all within
Be clean as Thou, my Lord, art clean.

X.

ABOUT GETTING ON IN LIFE.

IT is a right thing for a young man to aim high. He ought to strive hard to succeed and make progress, whatever be his trade or profession. Neither is it wrong for him to grow rich, to turn silver into gold, tens into hundreds, and hundreds into thousands.

If you mind how you do it, and the spirit which you bring into it, I can heartily wish you the greatest possible success and prosperity. In itself there is nothing wrong in having wealth, or in adding each year hundreds and thousands to your store. The employment of it may prove a useful discipline, and in your hands it may prove a precious talent and a blessing to many. More than this, if well used, it may add immensely to your power of doing good, and hence to the brightness of your crown hereafter.

Only a few weeks ago I met one whom I had not seen for more than thirty years. He was then a young clerk of small means, but by his skill in finance he has risen to a very important position, and has amassed many thousands. But he is the same earnest Christian man still, and I feel sure that his wealth brings help and comfort to many around him.

But do not forget the other side. There is a danger in getting rich, which ought not to be overlooked. St. Paul tells us that "covetousness is idolatry," and he classes the covetous with the unclean, fornicators and the like, who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." St. Paul also tells us that "the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." So you see there needs caution. If you wish to live as a Christian ought, and to gain the highest blessing man can have, watch lest harm and damage come to you through that which in itself is both lawful and right.

I remember a remark of Richard Cecil. A young man came to him once and said

that a fortune had come to him, and he hoped he would congratulate him. "I will pray for you," said the good man. The remark seems to be very much in harmony with the prayer in our Litany, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us!"

I want you very much to bear in mind four points. They may show you when success and money-getting becomes sin. They may serve to point out when a right and noble ambition to make progress in life degenerates into covetousness, and becomes a snare and a peril to the soul.

1. *When gold becomes an idol and steals the heart from God.*

You remember the golden image set up in the plain of Dura, and how great and small fell down and worshipped it. And is not a huge image set up in this land of England, only it consists of minted gold and silver, bank-notes, bank shares, stocks, securities, title-deeds, and I know not what else? Are there not multitudes who make Mammon their god? Many fevers are prevalent in our country—scarlet fever, typhoid, rheumatic, and others—but I

fancy gold fever is the worst of all. What over-carefulness it creates! How often the thought of business overshadows everything else, and becomes a thorn and a briar which utterly chokes the good seed!

I once knew a man that gloried in the possession of fifty pounds a week from freehold rents, and yet I never could get his ear for two minutes with respect to the great future which was fast approaching him. Sir Noel Paton has a grand picture—"Death and Life"—which teaches the same lesson. It is Bunyan's "Man with the muckrake." Here is the man in his dungeon, with eager, maniac eye fixed on the baubles he reckons so precious. His lamp is just extinguished, and Christ behind holds out in vain the crown which he will not care to seek. There is a terrible truth in the picture. The American Evangelist told a story when he was in England of a man who set his heart on getting rich, and he did it. Four times he heard sermons preached on the text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and each time more and more strongly his heart rose up in rebellion against God's

command, and he said, "No! I will seek first to get a fortune, and then I may have time to look after religion." His wish was gratified, and he had a large estate he could call his own, but it did not bring peace. A dark cloud settled over him. After a time reason gave way, and in later days the word of Divine wisdom which he had despised seemed always to haunt him.

Oftentimes the love of money comes strangely in conflict with natural affection.

Some years ago a rich man was arranging with a sculptor about an expensive monument which he wished to erect in memory of a beloved wife. But there was a terrible struggle. His reluctance to part with money on the one hand, and love to his wife's memory on the other, made it hard for him to decide.

In this case the better affection triumphed, and at a very considerable cost he ordered the work to be done.

But when the conflict is between the love of money and the love of an unseen Saviour, too often the former gains the upper hand. And where this is so, it is sin—downright sin and covetousness.

The great commandment is broken. Another god instead of Jehovah rules on the throne of the inner man. Take then this test. Here are two masters: which is supreme? Christ or Mammon, God or money,—which stands first in your esteem? When they come unto competition, which wins the day? Is the main bias towards L. S. D., or towards the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy? What do those who know you best think on this point?

If you are wrong here, beware of danger. The train is off the line. You have turned off into the broad way. You are forsaking the substance for the shadow. You are burying the true life of the soul in a vault built of gold.

2. Another test is this: *You sin when you forget that you are a steward and not an owner of what you possess.*

Remember that all power to get wealth is from above. You are only put in trust for a season with whatever property you call your own. It is the one talent, or the two talents, or the five talents which the Master has committed to your care. He

saith, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine;" "occupy till I come:" use it for my glory, for your needs; for the poor, the sick, the sorrowful, and to send forth my servants to preach my gospel.

Are there not many who fail here? Men accumulate large fortunes or possess a very considerable annual income, and then hoard or spend it without the least regard to the will of God. They deal with it as if it were absolutely their own. They hide from themselves the truth that the Master is coming and will call each of us to give an account of our stewardship. The spendthrift, the man who has wasted hundreds or thousands on luxurious entertainments, on decorating his house, or some favourite hobby of his own, and has never weighed his vast responsibilities towards the world and the Church, will then have to answer for it before a tribunal from which there is no escape. If any reader be inclined to deal with money in the way I have pointed out, just see how you stand. Is it not plain robbery for a steward to use the rents received for a landlord and appropriate them for his own purposes?

And is it any less sin for you or me to take our Lord's money and to spend it without regard to His will ?

3. *You sin when, in the pursuit of wealth, you swerve one hair's-breadth from the path of truth and honesty.*

You cannot be guiltless if for any consideration you countenance fraud and deceit and double-dealing in business transactions. No one can tell the harm that is done by professing Christians acting in this way. In men's haste to get rich they will use all sorts of crafty devices to increase their profits. A false character is given to goods; a second-rate article is substituted for a better; wrong weights, wrong measures, wrong marks are used; an invoice is made out with a charge that has never been incurred; a different sample is shown to the main quantity of wheat or other grain; wares are smuggled though the custom-house under false designations; debts are left long unpaid, and then the Bankruptcy Court wipes off the score; risks are taken with trust-money which ought never to have been touched;

all sorts of dishonest shifts are resorted to to gain an extra shilling ; in this way things are done which perhaps no human court can ever touch, but which will never pass the scrutiny of the great day.

Whatever is permitted or practised of all this makes it manifest that the golden image is worshipped and the God of truth and righteousness is not regarded.

4. *When you have no glad, joyful gifts to pour into the Lord's treasury.*

Covetousness has taken a firm root-hold in the soul when there is no hearty, willing response to the calls of Christian benevolence. You may judge much of a man's character by this test. Some will give occasionally a large amount for an object that will get them a name, the building of a church or a hospital, or to head a subscription list with a large amount ; or they may give, when urgently requested, to get rid of an importunate collector. But what is there of free-will offerings, of a warm and hearty response to an appeal that makes it a pleasure to ask ? What is there of systematic giving, a man giving a dis-

ting proportion of his gains or of his income; so that the means are at hand when the call comes? What is there of anticipating needs, or of noticing them when named in the newspaper or the parochial magazine, or by a friend's casual remark, and promptly sending a cheque, or a half-sovereign, or, it may be, a few postage stamps?

It requires an Act of Parliament "*to relax the dead man's hand*," as it is called, over property he has left for any purpose; but it needs a heart full of God's grace and holy love to relax the hand of the living man, to open his purse and his cash-box, and to give freely, cheerfully, plenteously, in the service of Christ and His Church.

Wherever such a spirit exists, it is a spring of constant pleasure to the possessor and a means of untold good to others.

I remember hearing of two young men, both Christians, who entered into partnership. But they took in a *third partner*, and conscientiously set apart one-third of the profits for Him. You can guess perhaps who the third partner was.

It is time I came to a close. Weigh these four points well and they will guide you in this matter. Put God first. Remember you are not your own, neither is the wealth that comes to you. Avoid all double-dealing and act truly as in the sight of God. Reckon it your highest privilege to honour the Lord with your substance and the first-fruits of all your increase. Act in this way, and, it may be, you will rise higher in life than you could ever have looked for, but it will only add to your usefulness, and not stand in the way of your reaching in safety your eternal home.

One word more I will add. The best safeguard I can give you is to counsel you to follow the Saviour's words: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. vi.)

Strive to get very rich in that wealth which will never disappoint you, and which will never take wings and fly away.

Day by day strive to grow "rich in faith," "rich in good works," "rich toward God."

Now and then take stock. See how you are getting on. Consider ways and means of increasing your store. Remember that prayer, self-sacrifice, the spirit of holy love and charity, zeal in winning souls, valour for God's truth, watchfulness against little thieves, who may steal your time, your money, or your good desires and resolutions—these will all help you much. Most of all, live on Christ, and depend on Him continually. Unsearchable riches are His, and as you live by faith on Him, they become more and more your own. They are all yours by virtue of your union with Him when you trust Him, but you must draw upon them more and more. "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

XI.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY RELIGION?"

I CAN imagine this question being put to me by some young man who reads this book. I look upon you as a capital young fellow in your way. You are honest and trusty, active and diligent in the duties of your calling. You are a comfort to your parents, and they can never speak too well of you. You abhor late hours and profligate courses, and you seem to be in the fair road for a useful and prosperous life. Beside this, you never miss being in your place at church, and perhaps, too, you help in teaching in the Sunday-school or some similar work. But you are not quite satisfied; you feel sometimes as if there was something wanting. On the whole, you are pretty well content with yourself, and yet there are times when you would like to be more sure that God

accepts you, and that your soul is safe. So that you would feel rather disposed, if I were talking with you, to put to me this question, "What do you think of my religion?"

A very faithful but rather hasty servant of Christ once had this question put to him by a rich lady. She had asked him to call upon her, and when he was seated in her drawing-room, she began to relate to him all her good deeds, and how much she had done for the poor and the suffering. It was a long story, and the catalogue of her graces and virtues and good works was quite overwhelming. My friend listened very patiently till she had finished, and intended then quietly to show her the mistake she was making. But she had such a high opinion of herself, and her ways and doings, that she never doubted but her pastor would think her a very paragon of Christian excellence. So, very confidently she closed up her narration by putting to him the question of which I have been speaking—"Now, what do you think of my religion?"

She had a reply very blunt and straight-

forward, and certainly not the one she expected.

"Madam," said he, pointing to his hat on the table, "you have no more religion than that hat!"

He went away displeased and grieved with himself. He felt that he had not spoken with the meekness and gentleness that became a servant of Christ. It was probable, too, that he had shut the door against himself, so that he would have no further opportunity of speaking to her.

But it proved otherwise. It was a nail fastened in a sure place. It was a sharp arrow that pierced the shield of a Pharisaic spirit. It led the lady to examine herself, and then to see her sinfulness and to learn the way of salvation.

Now you may be far from the open, glaring self-righteousness of this lady, but it may be equally true of you, in God's sight, that you have "no more religion than a hat." Your religion may all turn upon self. There is a secret dependence upon your own character, upon your freedom from vice, upon your home conduct, that mars whatever is good about you.

If you were really to tell the ground of your hope, it would be what you have been or have not been, what you have done or have not done. You look at yourself in the wrong glass. Instead of placing yourself in the presence of God's holy law, you compare yourself with those who live in wilful sin or neglect. You have no just idea of your guiltiness before God, and you are buoyed up with at least some hope that you will be saved as you are.

One day I met a very pleasant-looking young man in the train and handed him a little book. He received it kindly, and I tried to draw him into conversation. Then he came close up to me and said, "There's a question I should like to ask you, sir." "What is it?" I replied; "I will try to answer it if I can." "Well," said he, "I want to know this. I have not been as good as I ought, but I have not been bad. Will God cast me away when I die?"

I tried to put the matter before him in its true light. I told him that he might not have been bad in his own eyes, but what was he in God's sight? I told him that God marked the thoughts and desires

of the heart, and that the very least taint of sin was hateful before Him. I told him that I dare not trust in the very best day I had lived on earth, for that in every day there was sin enough to condemn me. Then I spoke to him about the words in Rom. iii., "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Have you ever clearly understood this most important passage of God's Word?

Perhaps you say that it cannot be so, and that there is a great difference between one and another. One man has sunk far deeper in sin than another. One man has done far more harm by his life and example than another. I quite admit all this. No doubt there are degrees in evil according to men's natural dispositions, their associates, their habits, and the years that men have lived in sin. Still for all this the text is true. In a very distinct sense "there is no difference." Suppose twenty men undertake a feat, to run a certain number of miles in a single day, and each one who accomplishes his task is to receive a prize. The effort is made, but none of the men reach the goal by the time appointed.

One man may have run twenty-five miles, another thirty, another perhaps has come within a few yards, but all fail in reaching the appointed spot. In this case there is a difference as to the efforts they have made and the distance they have run, but there is no difference in this, that all have failed in gaining the prize. Is it not so with man? Some have run the race better than others. Some have lived more moral, exemplary lives. But where is there one that has fulfilled the work to which he has been called? Where is one who has so run the way of God's commandments that he has reached the goal, and that he can claim the prize of a sinless, blameless life?

Nay, very, very far from this has it been with each and all. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Oft have we stumbled on the road. Oft have sloth and negligence clogged our feet. Oft have sin and backsliding turned us aside from the course. Ten thousand times ten thousand deeds of positive disobedience lie at our door, and these multiplied by as many more have been less than the idle unfruitful words and vain and evil thoughts

which have been marked by the heart-searching God.

To know this is the A, B, C of true godliness. The first step in a life well-pleasing to God is humility, self-condemnation, and confession of past sin.

Beginning here, it goes forward by faith in Christ, by constant reliance upon His blood, His grace, and His free promise, and is adorned and beautified with all heavenly virtues and works of obedience and charity. If you were to ask me what I think of your religion, I should like to ask you what is its foundation? what is the main spring of your actions? what is the spirit of your whole life?

Does it begin in utter self-abasement? Does it find hope and help and strength in Christ alone? Is it manifested in fervent love to the Saviour and unselfish love to man for His sake? Or I should like to ask you to prove your own self by a few words from the Epistle to the Ephesians (ii. 8-10). This short passage seems to me a most precious gem of Divine teaching. It lays a good foundation, and then shows how the building is to be raised upon it. It is

a *multum in parvo*, and deserves the careful thought of every Christian.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

See here how salvation begins with casting off any hope in self. It is wholly by grace, that is, by God's free, unmerited kindness. You cannot earn it, for it is a gift, a present, as much as if I give a shilling to a beggar whom I have never seen before. You cannot obtain it "of yourselves," of your own doings, feelings, repentings. It is not of works, lest any man should boast. So that all pride of self and what self can do is laid in the dust. You must renounce it utterly. With an empty hand, with no plea in yourself but want and misery and sin, you must look for it wholly to the abounding mercy of God in Christ.

See, too, that true religion is built up by faith in Jesus. Faith is the receiving grace.

It receives at first free remission of sins through Christ's blood. It receives also day by day fresh grace, fresh peace, fresh power through the Holy Ghost. From first to last faith is the hand that takes the benefit. The more faith, the more strength and blessing. "According to your faith be it unto you." Only when there was no longer a vessel to receive it did the widow's oil stay; only when faith is lacking will there be a withholding of the grace of the Spirit.

Nor can we fail to discern a third point. Where faith receives the gift of salvation, the soul becomes God's new creation. Those who are saved by grace are not left as they were, to live in carelessness or sin, but are formed and fashioned in the beauty of holiness, to live lives devoted to God's glory. They are His "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them." Never forget that the apostle who sets forth our free justification in Christ in the clearest light, no less forcibly in all his epistles sets before us good works as the sure and necessary result of a living faith.

Let there be no mistake here. There needs first a good foundation, but there needs no less a good building to rest upon it. So that whilst you make Christ alone your sure resting-place by faith in Him, you must be careful that a Christ-like life manifests the reality of your faith and the power of His indwelling Spirit.

To enable you to live a truly Christian life, you will need every possible help, and amongst these you cannot dispense with Church-membership.

If these pages should be read by any Nonconformist, let me say to you that it is not my object in writing them to make you a Churchman, but to lead you to know and follow Christ. It is my firm conviction that all systems of Church government are only valuable as they point from themselves to Him, and lead men to find their all in Him. Probably it is for this reason that so little is said in the New Testament upon the subject. Thank God if by any means souls find Him, build on Him, and grow up in His likeness. If this be so with thee, brother, the Lord keep thee steadfast in His faith, and fill thee

more and more with love to Him and all His people. Hold fast to that which is good. Be no companion of those who write or speak bitter and hard things of those who differ from them. Do not try to pull down or root up a Church with which you cannot agree. Let all your things be done with charity ; and if in everything we cannot see eye to eye at present, there is a time coming when all will be clear as day in the presence of Him we love.

But these pages may probably be read by many who belong to our Church ; and I should not be true to my own convictions if I did not express my warm attachment to her constitution, her doctrines, and her services. When rightly administered, on the true basis of her Articles, her Homilies, and her formularies, I believe that no branch of Christ's Church is more helpful in fostering sober, practical, genuine godliness. As a member of the English Church I found Christ, and within her walls I have learnt year by year much that I trust will help me to the last hour of my life. Hence I trust ever to remain faithful to her communion.

And I should advise you to do the same. *A rolling stone gathers no moss.* If you have found Christ in the Church of England, do not forsake her, but do your utmost to promote her purity and extend her influence. Do not wander from place to place.

One evil I have noticed which it will be well for the young Christian carefully to avoid, if liable to fall into it.

After a stirring Mission season or after hearing a striking preacher, young people who have been interested sometimes turn away from a plain, faithful, practical ministry to seek something more exciting, something that is more of a revival character. But usually this is a great mistake. In the end it does more harm than good. A sort of preaching that may occasionally be very useful may yet, in the long-run, fail to edify the Christian nearly as much as a homely, faithful exposition of the Word of God. Do not run after great preachers or something new in the service, but be content with wholesome pastures, where you may be nourished and fed with the plain teaching of gospel truth.

There is another danger against which I would guard you. Never go to church for the sake of the music only, or chiefly. No doubt to young people who have a musical taste there may be a great attraction in elaborate services, in the anthem beautifully sung, and the like, but to regard this most, is to lose the whole blessing and comfort you might gain. In church, as well as alone, seek to worship God in the beauty of holiness, and in deep sincerity and earnestness of heart. Let the Spirit guide your devotions, and depend upon His mighty aid to strengthen you in fervent prayer and in joyful praise. Do not turn aside to those who promise you a perfect Church. You will not find perfection in the Church of England, in her system, or in her ministers. But where will you find it till you reach the better land? Perhaps, where men boast of it most loudly, you will find more strife, division, controversy, and hair-splitting, and less quiet peace and piety, than elsewhere.

Therefore my counsel to you would be, *Cleave steadfastly to the Church of your fathers.* More than this, make good use of all the help she affords you.

If you have not been confirmed come

forward when you have the opportunity, and in this ordinance openly confess your purpose of faithfully serving Christ. If you depend on the aid of the Holy Spirit, both in the previous preparation and also in the ordinance itself, you will receive new strength and power for the difficulties you must expect to meet with.

Likewise be regular in your attendance at the Holy Communion. If received in faith, Christ will draw nigh to you, and give you a fresh joy and peace in believing.

You may also find important help in the Church seasons. As Advent, Christmas, Lent, Passion Week, Easter, Ascension-tide and Whitsuntide come round, the old foundation truths, of which you then hear so much, will be brought back to your memory, and you will be confirmed and built up in that knowledge which is most essential to your progress in the divine life.

I would add, also, that you may find in the Book of Common Prayer invaluable aid to true and spiritual worship.

Times without number I have found the petitions of the Litany and many of the Collects have assisted me when I was weary, or when thought was flagging, or

when I desired to offer a petition for some particular blessing which was forcibly put in some one of them. Study your Prayer-Book with this in view, and you will find much help, and you will be able still more earnestly to follow the prayers when used in public worship.

On this point I would only say, Love your Church, but never put it in place of Christ. Love the means of grace, but never forget you must depend wholly upon the Spirit of grace.

"What do you think of my religion?" I have tried to answer this question as well as I could. Think over what I have said. Remember it is not every house that will stand when the great water-floods prevail. It is not every hope that will stand the test of the great day. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Words like these give the right decision. For re-

member, the one important question to consider is this, "*What does Christ think of my religion?*" He alone can decide. He searches the heart. To Him all things are naked and open. Where you and I must spend eternity, He will declare when He appears. For "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." The following hymn by Frances Ridley Havergal reminds us of the one hope that will abide the day of trial:—

Nothing to pay ! ah, nothing to pay
Never a word of excuse to say !
Year after year thou hast filled the score,
Owing thy Lord still more and more.
Hear the voice of Jesus say,
" Verily thou hast nothing to pay !
Ruined, lost art thou, and yet
I forgive thee all that debt."

Nothing to pay ! the debt is so great ;
What will you do with the awful weight ?
How shall the way of escape be made ?
Nothing to pay ! yet it must be paid !
Hear the voice of Jesus say,
" Verily thou hast nothing to pay !
All has been put to My account,
I have paid the full amount."

Nothing to pay ! yes, nothing to pay !
Jesus has cleared all the debt away,
Blotted it out with His bleeding hand ;
Free and forgiven and loved you stand.
Hear the voice of Jesus say,
" Verily thou hast nothing to pay !
Paid is the debt, and the debtor free !
Now I ask thee, lovest thou Me ?"

XII.

"YOUNG MEN WANTED."

YOU have probably noticed occasionally a bill with this heading. It is often to be seen posted about our large towns or country villages, informing the reader that "young men are wanted for Her Majesty's service." It then goes on to state whether it is for the cavalry, infantry, or rifles, or, it may be, for the navy. It describes the needful qualifications, sobriety, freedom from physical defects, height, and other particulars, and then names the advantages to be obtained, the bounty on entering the service, the wages, and the pension to be given after so many years. I have no doubt sometimes a bill like this, usually printed in red and black letters, presents a tempting prospect to young men out of work, or to such as are tired of home life and want a change.

Still it is well to remember that "all is not gold that glitters," and it is wise for young fellows to think twice before they forsake their home and take up a life that is full of danger and temptation.

But there is another service which has likewise its dangers and temptations, but which none ever regret who have heartily entered upon it. It is about this that I want to say a word. "*Young men are wanted for the King's service,*" and this King is none other than the Lord Jesus. For setting up and maintaining His kingdom in the world young men are specially needed, and never more than at the present day. The conflict between faith and unbelief, truth and error, righteousness and moral evil, waxes stronger and stronger. At the same time doors are open everywhere to carry the message of Christ's gospel. Never was it more plain that the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. In spite of all the power of the enemy, glorious victories are being won for Christ, and in most unlikely quarters souls are reached, and not a few translated from the

power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. But for this warfare agents are wanted, specially young men.

I am aware that the King is at this time making large use of other agency. He "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," and in a very marvellous way has He lately been employing Christian women to fight His battles. In the army and navy, amongst the sailors at our seaports, and amongst the rough youths in our villages, and no less amongst the working men of our large towns, ladies have been doing a blessed work for Christ. They are also carrying the lamp of God's truth into the dark homes of their Hindoo and Mohammedan sisters, and are thus in no small degree furthering the great missionary enterprise of the Church. Nevertheless the work is great, far beyond our present resources, and young men are urgently needed. Godly, devoted young men, who have faith in God and His Word, are needed as good soldiers in the army of our King. We want them for the ministry at home; we want them to carry the banner of the Cross unto far-off lands.

We want them to witness for Christ, and truth, and righteousness in every rank of society. What need is there of young men as officers, barristers, lawyers, on the Stock Exchange and in the counting-house, behind the counter and in the workshop, in the highest circles and in the humblest, who shall be known to be on the Lord's side, and whose influence for good shall be felt wherever they go !

Young men are also wanted to gather in the young and to teach in our Sunday-schools. They are wanted to forward the good work of "Christian Associations" and the like. They are wanted to help in our mission-rooms, to fetch in the wanderers, and then to be able to speak faithful, loving words to win them for Christ. In fact, there is no effort for good in which a young man may not do a great work for His Master, if only he go forth in His name and look up to Him for guidance and strength.

Here let me say that I believe it impossible to over-estimate the mighty influence of one young man. For good or for ill, the life, the example, the conversation of

one will leave its mark on hundreds of his fellows, and it may be on thousands. We are told that "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," and such is a young man's life. By his necessary avocation, in whatever rank of life he may be, he is constantly mingling with others, and what he is, and what he does, and what he says, most surely does its work. Look on the brighter side. We read of "a young man whose name was Saul." Whilst on his way to Damascus to persecute the Church, a voice from heaven spake to him and he obeyed. Henceforth he yielded a willing obedience to the Saviour whom before he had rejected. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" was his inquiry. And when he knew the Lord's will, he gave his whole life to fulfil it. Rejoicing always in the Lord, singing a song of gladness even in the gloomy dungeon of Philippi and with his feet fast in the stocks, he carried everywhere the sweet savour of Christ's name. He proclaimed in many lands the gospel of peace, and turned myriads from the power of Satan unto God. That one young man in his own day brought a blessing to

multitudes, and by the fruit of his work and the influence of his writings he is still doing his Master's work in every Christian Church throughout the world.

But leaving Paul, consider the power of one young man of the present day. You are the young man I mean. If you are out-and-out on the Lord's side, if you are thoroughly loyal to your King, both by the consistency of your walk and the plainness of your testimony, and if God spare your life for a few years, you may become a power for good that might at this moment seem to you impossible. "Most men overrate their talents and underrate their influence." Never was a truer word spoken than this. A man's influence is always telling in all directions. Then think of the *increase* of talents when fully consecrated to the Lord. Your natural abilities may not be great. You may not have wealth, or rank, or great gifts of utterance. Your education may have been deficient. But for all this, you may prove a mighty power for good in Christ's Church and the world. Your one talent may become two, and these again may be multiplied and in-

creased. So that the young man who began with but one talent may end his course with fifty or a hundred, and all of them owned and accepted and blessed by the Master. Take a well-known example. A young man in an American store is led by a kind word and a teacher's hand laid on his shoulder to give himself to the Lord's service. With the love of Christ in his heart and a determination to do what he can, he begins his work. An attic, a tallow candle, and a negro lad to whom he is teaching the story of the Prodigal—here is his first effort to do good.

A few years rolled by, and the one talent has become a hundred. The same servant of Christ has an open door to preach to large multitudes in many of the principal towns in England and America, and by his means a new impetus is given to the work of winning souls for Christ.

Let me give another example of influence on a smaller scale. A young man in a warehouse has learnt to value a Saviour's love. But he has a great stumbling-block. In the room where his work lies he is

constantly pained by the filthy language which is used ; besides this, the only talk is of betting, horse - racing, and similar topics. The young man makes it seen that such conversation is not according to his taste. Sometimes he will leave the room ; at other times he will utter a word of reproof or be silent. He has to bear no little ridicule for a time, but consistent conduct has its effect, and the time comes when in that warehouse such language is scarcely ever heard. It has come about through the quiet influence of one young servant of Christ, who courteously but firmly showed his utter abhorrence of that which was evil and injurious.

But what sort of young men are wanted ? What are the qualifications for this service ? It matters not whether they are tall or short, of high degree or low, strong or weakly. But there are points which are absolutely essential. Three or four of these I will name.

The first essential is that "*your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*" You must know something of the joy and comfort of free forgiveness in

Christ, and stand firm on the blessed promises made to us in Him. Every true soldier of Christ must follow the path marked out in Holy Scripture. Confess the sins of your youth, accept salvation through Christ's blood, and put on by faith the glorious robe of complete justification in Him. Glory in Christ alone. Make Him your righteousness and strength. From first to last let "Jesus only" be your motto. Trust Him as your High Priest to plead for you. Trust Him as your Physician to heal you. Trust him as your King to fight for you, and to trample all your enemies under your feet.

Another qualification is *Decision*. There must be no half-heartedness. There must be no double-mindedness. There must be no wavering and no uncertainty. There must be no halting between two opinions. You cannot serve two masters. You must be for God or the world, for Christ or the devil. Be sure you will find it to be the safest and happiest course openly to confess Christ, never to be ashamed of His name, in every company to be ready, as occasion serve, to acknowledge Him as

your King, and not to shrink from the sacrifice which His service may involve. Let there be the same decision as to moral duty. If you are Christ's, let there be no parleying with sin and temptation. Never hesitate between right and wrong, between that which is pleasant to the flesh and that which will honour and please God. I have read of a picture where a young man is standing by a precipice. Close by is a long ladder reaching down to the middle of hell, but also reaching far above into the midst of heaven. Each round of the ladder below the level of the rock is marked with some vice, and each round above it labelled with some virtue. The young man stands with his hand upon the ladder and a look of hesitation and uneasiness in his face. His name is INDECISION.

Let not this be your name or your character. Be of one mind and of one heart in following that which is good and in abhorring and rejecting that which is evil. Pray that you may be filled with the Holy Ghost, and by the same Spirit strengthened with all might in the inner man. Then in

the power of the Spirit take up thy cross daily. Exercise self-restraint. Mortify and resist every sinful passion. Go forth manfully to do what lies in you to honour Christ and advance His kingdom in the world. You must be decided. There is no comfort or blessing in any other course. The Master has said it—"He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, was speaking to the ambassador of the Elector of Brandenburg. He had been sorely tried by the lukewarmness of those whom he had come to help, and he uttered a few plain words which are worth recalling: "This I say unto you plainly beforehand, I will hear and know nothing of neutrality. His Highness must be friend or foe. When I come to his borders, he must declare himself hot or cold. The battle is between God and the devil. Will his Highness hold with God? Let him stand on my side. Will he prefer to hold with the devil? Then he must fight against me. A third position cannot be granted him."

This is certainly true in the great conflict in which the Church of Christ is engaged. You must take your side and keep it. Unless you take Christ for your King and boldly maintain His cause, you stand toward Him in the position of an enemy and a rebel.

With this qualification of decision there comes another. There must be steadfast, undaunted *Courage*. If you would do a great work for God in the world, you must be no coward. Though enemies and difficulties meet you, struggle on and never know when you are beaten. A handful of English soldiers at Rorke's Drift fought on and contended all night long against hosts of Zulus, and thus maintained the honour of their country and prevented great evils which might otherwise have resulted. You need a like determination. You need to be bold as a lion, and fearless against all the enemies of Christ's kingdom.

Whilst staying for a week in the Isle of Man, I noticed everywhere the coat of arms belonging to it. On public buildings, in the shops, fastened on various objects

of merchandise, and in some shape on the dress of the inhabitants or visitors, you see the figure of the three legs armed and spurred, and sometimes the motto beneath: "Quocunque jeceris, stabit."

"During several centuries the island, standing alone in the mid-ocean, was a battlefield for contending nations. English, and Irish, Saxon and Dane, here strove for the mastery. The coat of arms seems to refer to one result of this in the brave character of the islanders. Swift and strong, they were ready to attack, courageous in the fight, and prepared to follow quickly the retreating foe." The motto gives somewhat the same idea. "Throw him where you will, he will stand."

And must not this be the spirit of Christ's faithful soldier? You must be quick to run the Master's errand or to face the foes of your salvation. You must be strong in the Lord to war a good warfare for Him. Wherever your lot is cast, in smooth places or in rough, in Jerusalem, in Rome, or in Babylon, you must stand firm and immovable on the rock of God's truth. You must not follow a multitude to do evil. You

must not be carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine. You must not forsake the way of righteousness because it is evil spoken of. Rather hold fast by the faithful Word, and even unto death cleave steadfastly to the banner of the Cross.

"Young men wanted!" Will you come forward? Will you give yourself wholly to Christ, and then offer yourself to His ministers to do some work for Him? Will you do it now, without delay or hesitation?

It is a noble service. Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and Saints in all ages have taken part in it, and at the present day tens of thousands of zealous and devoted followers of the Lamb are ready to sacrifice all they possess, if need be, to fulfil the work committed to them.

And this service brings a great reward. When a man enlists into the Queen's army, there is the bounty at first, the wages each week, and the pension at last. In Christ's service there is something to correspond to these. Though all is of free grace and none of merit, yet there is at first the peace and consolation of forgiven sin, grace and strength, and many a mark of encourage-

ment during the work, and at last the final reward—"a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Finish thy work ! the time is short,
The sun is in the west,
The night is coming down ; till then,
Think not of rest.

Yes, finish all thy work, then rest ;
Till then rest never ;
The rest prepared for thee by God
Is rest for ever.

Finish thy work, then wipe thy brow,
Ungird thee from thy toil ;
Take breath, and from each weary limb
Shake off the soil.

Finish thy work, then go in peace,
Life's battle fought and won ;
Hear from the throne the Master's voice,
" Well done ! well done ! "

Finish thy work, then take thy harp,
Give praise to God above,
Sing a new song of mighty joy
And endless love.

Give thanks to Him who held thee
In all thy path below,
Who made thee faithful to the death,
And crowns thee now.

XIII.

A FRIENDLY WISH.

A YOUNG man on reaching his majority had friends gathered around him for a pleasant social evening. Many who loved him were there, and not a few breathed into his ear some kindly expression of good-will. But one wish sank deeper than all and was never forgotten. It was that of a Christian lady who was thinking of the great future, and who desired above all things his eternal welfare. "May you live for ever!" was her hearty prayer on his behalf.

It is likewise my earnest prayer for each young man who may read this book. May your life on earth be a bright and joyous one, receiving day by day fresh blessing from a Father's hand, and then carrying blessing wherever your lot may be cast! May you now find increasing delight in your Father's Word, and may you be

made more and more meet for the city of the living God! May your life beyond the grave be amongst the redeemed, from whom sorrow and sighing have fled away for ever!

Is this your aim and desire? Is this the goal to which you are pressing?

I have no doubt that it is so with many who read these pages. You have come to Jesus and been forgiven. You have taken your place as a pardoned, accepted child in the great family, and share all the love which a Father can pour out upon you. If so, what should be your purpose? What should be your main desire in life?

Is it not to glorify God and to please Him in all you do? I would suggest to you a short prayer for frequent use. You will find it in the Prayer-Book version of Ps. cxliii. 10, "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God." You must not seek to please yourself. You must not be content with pleasing those around you. You must rise still higher. Ye ought "to walk and please God, and to abound more and more"

in doing so; you must, "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Nor is it a hard thing to please God. A loving father will delight in the least token of a child's affection. It may be but a look, a word, a letter, a quick run to fetch something required, a flower, an act of self-denial; even a warm greeting on coming home will not be undervalued. Nor will our Father in heaven despise the least thing that comes from a trusting, loving heart. A heavenly thought, a momentary prayer, a kind effort to soothe another's sorrow, a gift of very small cost—these as well as greater things will please our Father above.

Let this be your perpetual aim. Strive to please God in everything, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances. Christ could say, "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him." And will you not follow in His footsteps? And in doing so, shall you not enjoy the same consolation of a Father's constant presence?

"Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee!" Such a prayer will not be lost.

God will teach you how to please Him. He will send His loving Spirit to dwell in you, and in mightier power to renew you in knowledge and holiness. He will open your eyes to see your faults, and then will give you strength to overcome them. He will remind you continually of His own nearness to you, that you may walk before Him and walk with Him. He will endue you with the heavenly graces of faith, love, zeal, patience and the like, which are so acceptable in His sight. He will teach you to honour Him both with your lips and your life. In short, He will "cleanse the thoughts of your heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that you may perfectly love Him and worthily magnify His holy name."

Therefore plead this petition before Him. When your path is clouded, when temptation assaults you, when the love of ease or pleasure would turn you out of the narrow path, again and yet again present in faith this prayer, "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee." And if you would please God, strive to make progress. It has been said that in the present day

there is more breadth in Christianity than height. There is more profession of the truth but less eminence in holiness. Let not this be so with you. Be zealous to excel. Be not content with a commonplace standard. Press on to high attainments. Yield up your heart fully to Christ, and ask Him to fill every niche and cranny with Himself. Let every chamber be replenished from His own bounteous grace.

Another point. When life is over, it will be a blessed thing if you have accomplished some good work which has left a mark on the generation amongst whom you lived.

“Do something for the glory of God,” was a word spoken once to a young man by his dying father. That message lead to a life-work of no mean character. Henceforth Peter Drummond laboured with no slack hand, and through his diligent work in many fields of Christian effort many souls were saved and millions of gospel books and tracts have been scattered throughout the world.


But whatever you may be enabled to do, ever remember that from first to last

your peace, your strength, your hope lies in a simple, whole-hearted dependence upon Christ alone.

Think of Him at all times as your High Priest and Intercessor before the throne, as your Leader and Captain in the warfare you have to wage, as your Righteousness and your Robe under the remembrance of sin, and as your Eternal Refuge and Portion amidst the various changes of this mortal life.

But this book may fall into the hand of some one who is yet a stranger to Christ. Your face is in the wrong direction. You are in a train whose terminus is Hell. You are in a ship that will soon founder, and your soul will perish eternally.

A youth came up to London to enter upon a situation as clerk in a house of business. A Christian in the same office spoke to him very kindly and yet faithfully about **his** life and the hope that is in Christ. "If you are everlastingly preaching to me," said he, "I shall cut you. Were I to die to-morrow, I would gather my friends together to-night and have a good time of it."



But within a week of this conversation, the subtle disease of typhoid fever laid hold upon him, and he had no more opportunities for "a good time," as he expressed it. "What have I done that I should die so young?" he said, almost in anger against God. One thing at least he had done. He had been invited to the marriage-feast and he had made light of it. Whilst we dare never judge the condition of another, is there not too much reason to fear that he knew not the day of his visitation and that the door was forever shut against him?

But do you not wish to live for ever? If so, you must forsake all sin and come at once to Him who can cleanse you from it. Whatever you have been hitherto, Christ calls you now. You may have been wild and wicked; your life may have been a stumbling-block and cause of offence to others; your lips may have been polluted by foul language. All this may be true, and a great deal more, but the question is, Will you turn now? Will you come to the Saviour for pardon and peace? Will you flee to Him for salvation, from the power of old temptations?

If you will, the door is open. Christ is ready to do all things for you.

Years ago a missionary was preaching in South India on the precious blood of Christ. He noticed a native giving great attention to the message, and when the rest of the congregation had left the room the man stayed behind. When every one had gone and the door was closed, he came very near to the preacher.

In a low, trembling voice he put a question referring to the words that had just been spoken. "Would the blood of Christ cleanse from the guilt of murder?" "Yes, for it cleanseth from all sin." "But would it cleanse from two murders?" was the next question. "Yes, even from two murders," was the answer.

"I have been a murderer," said the man, and have been on pilgrimage thousands of miles to get rid of my sin, but am still as unhappy as ever. If the blood of Christ will cleanse me, I will believe in Him."

And he did believe in him, and showed by his future life that his faith was true and genuine.

There is the same salvation for you. You

have not been a murderer, as the world counts murder, but has there never been envy or ill-will cherished in your heart? And is not hatred reckoned murder in God's sight?

Have you never pierced and crucified afresh the Saviour by your sin, perhaps by ridiculing or mocking His people? And has there been nothing of soul-murder, leading another into the path of evil?

Whatever there be of these or other breaches of God's holy law, you need the cleansing blood. And this blood has been shed for you, and if you repent and believe, it will make you whiter than snow.

There is a prayer suitable for a young man given in Ps. xxv. which I have often found very helpful. The Psalmist seems to put God's mercy first and last, and then puts between the sins of his early days, so that they may be swallowed up in the unfathomable depths of God's loving-kindness. The three "remembers" in verses 6 and 7 sound in my ear as so mighty a plea to bring before God. "*Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies*

and *Thy loving-kindnesses*, for they have been ever of old. *Remember not* the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; *according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord.*" Will not God hear a prayer like this? Be sure He will. "Your sins and iniquities He will remember no more." But He will remember you. You shall never be forgotten of Him. He will think of you when you are lonely and desolate. His eye will be upon you for good in each sorrow and temptation. He will watch over you in death's dark valley. Though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, His kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of His peace be removed.

But I would still plead with any who yet turn away from Christ or put off coming to Him till some future time. I am sure, my young friend, there is great peril in doing this, and there is endless blessedness in at once casting yourself on Christ.

A youth was left without much guidance in early days. His parents died when he was young, and in the house of business where he spent some three or four years

there were those whose example might have drawn him far astray. One day a thoroughly worldly man reproved him for a fault which he had committed. This was God's arrow to awaken him to a new life. "If such a one sees I did wrong, then I ought to look out," he said to himself. One night shortly afterwards he was going home. A thought flashed across his mind—"I am yet unsaved, unpardoned. Each year I grow more careless. Sermons make less impression than they used to do. Soon I shall be hardened in worldliness and sin. Then I shall die and be undone for ever. There is no time to be lost. It must be now or never. I must seek the Lord this very night, or I may never do so at all." Doubtless the Good Spirit of God suggested this train of thought and enabled him to follow its guiding. There and then, at the corner of a street, he offered a short prayer in his heart, the very first true prayer he had ever uttered. For the first time that night he began carefully to search the Scriptures. Having no Bible of his own, he took one down from the shelf of the room where he lodged. He then

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knelt down in prayer, and again sought pardon for the past and grace to live a new life.

More than thirty years have passed since that night, but its lesson can never be forgotten. Through many a scene of doubt and darkness, through many an hour of sorrow and trouble, the Lord has been faithful. In spite of sin and failure and shortcoming, He leads those who trust in Him, and He will save even to the uttermost. He will never fail a soul that leans on His mighty arm and relies on His sure, unerring word of promise.

Now will not you come and taste how good the Lord is? Will He not hear your prayer also? Will He not receive you and give you reason to testify of His love? If for one young man he has done far, far beyond his utmost thoughts, will He not equally show forth His loving-kindness toward you? Only prove it for yourself. Taste of the feast. Drink of the river. With humble faith in Jesus' name ask and ask again for all you need, and it will be given unto you. "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that

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seek Him" (Ezra viii. 22). "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). But let there be no delay. The past you cannot recall. The future is beyond your control. If the Spirit of God is awakening thought, yield yourself at once to His gentle sway. If not, you may quench the Spirit and He may leave you. Reject the voice that speaks to you, and it may be at the peril of your salvation.

You may be just at the turn of the road, and whatever path you choose, it may probably be a choice for eternity. Then hearken, believe, obey. Be content with no half measures; come to the point. Be thorough and whole-hearted. Take the lowest place and cast yourself in deepest humiliation at Christ's feet. Then trust Him utterly. Believe that He will freely save you and undertake all that concerns you. On your knees give yourself to Him to be His altogether and for ever. Let there be no more reserve, no more delay, no more uncertainty. "Burn the bridge behind you." Life is short. Eternity is near. The soul is unspeakably precious.

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Christ is All-mighty, All-merciful, All-faithful, All-sufficient. Why will you risk eternal woe?

SO NEAR the door—and the door stood wide !
CLOSE to the port—but *not inside* !
NEAR to the fold—yet *not within* !
ALMOST resolved to give up sin !—
ALMOST persuaded to count the cost !
ALMOST a Christian—and yet LOST !

Saviour, I come, I cry unto Thee,
Oh, let not these words be true of me :
I want to *come to the point to-day*,
Oh, suffer me not to turn away ;
Give me no rest till my soul shall be
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